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Transmission and transformation in higher education: Indigenisation, internationalisation and transculturality

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There have been various approaches to the transmission and transformation of systems, practices, knowledge and concepts in higher education in recent decades, chief among which are drives towards indigenisation, on the one hand, and towards internationalisation, on the other. After briefly discussing and dispensing with radical versions of these, theories that reject any claim to validity or legitimacy by the rival approach, this article examines more nuanced accounts that deserve appropriately serious consideration. Thus, in the former instance, there is an emphasis on the local that nonetheless acknowledges a debt to the global, whereas conversely the emphasis on the global is seen as compatible with an acknowledgement of diversity, difference and particularity. What is gained and what is lost in these various approaches to educational transmission and transformation? After reflecting, in this regard, on lessons from both Africa and Europe – in particular, on the debates in South Africa around Africanisation and decolonisation, and in Germany around global interdependence – I cautiously endorse the idea of 'transculturality' (as contrasted with 'multiculturality' and 'interculturality') as a promising philosophical perspective on transmission of knowledge and practices, and as conceptualising transformation of higher education. The role of philosophy, in particular, consists in part in counteracting the hegemony of both traditional and homogenising ('colonising') authority.

The institution of universities is based on the ideal of universality in its widest sense, universality of the domain of enquiry, striving for truth, unaffected by extraneous aims, intentions or prejudices. Striving for universality of the spirit, unrestrained by national or other political motivations. In short, what matters is the striving for universality of mind and spirit. It is no secret that we have been far more successful in developing the mind than in developing the personality. It seems that even the quest for knowledge is threatened by lack of persons of a truly universal spirit. If the universities remain true to their fundamental task, they may contribute significantly to the solution of the crises which threaten us today.

(Albert Einstein, speaking about the fundamental role of the university, in a tape recording made in Princeton in 1951; Einstein 2003, CD 2, track 7)

Indigenisation and internationalisation

With rapid changes in recent decades, in terms of technological advances, communication and travel, economic connectivity and dependencies, and – even more recently – in terms of increasing democratisation of societies, it comes as no surprise that corresponding changes have occurred and continue to occur in higher education. These changes concern not only how education is (to be) conceptualised, in terms of its nature and aims, but also the very transfer and transmission of systems, practices, knowledge and concepts in higher education. There have been a variety of responses to the transformational implications of globalisation for education and, in particular, for higher education. Chief among these are drives towards indigenisation, on the one hand, and towards internationalisation, on the other. The radical versions of these approaches reject any claim to validity or legitimacy by the rival approach. Thus, radical indigenisation involves a 'back to the roots'-type of traditionalism and nationalism that are more often than not inspired by the colonial experience and the need for political consolidation, respectively. Examples of this response include radical endorsements of Africanisation[1] and Afrocentrism,[2] which tend to reject

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1. As I will show in what follows, the idea of 'Africanisation' of educational systems indicates both interesting congruencies and dissonances with the problem of transformation in European higher education. What is noteworthy is, on the one hand, the parallel with 'Europeanisation' of the respective (higher) educational terrain, whereas, on the other hand, 'Africanisation' contains a strong ideological proximity to 'indigenisation'. My interest here resides with the possible contribution Africa can make to the 'European' (and, even more to the point, the global) enterprise.

2. The idea of 'Africanising' universities is frequently couched within a conception and language that are explicitly 'Afrocentric'. Afrocentrism does not simply mean teaching students about Africa, its history, cultures, philosophy and values, but it means 'placing

any 'outside' ('colonial', 'Western', 'Northern', 'European', 'Eurocentric', etc.) influence, and also segregationist forms of nationalism (such as some trends manifest in the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, etc.). What they arguably share, apart from an intense belief about internal homogeneity or an equally strong rejection of heterogeneity, is an instrumental usage of the concept of indigeneity. Indigenisation is seen not only as an effective instrument for political persuasion, mobilisation and justification, but also as a tool in transformation, be it educational, socio-economic or cultural. As such, it becomes symbolic and may actually produce a virulent form of the 'ethnicisation' of education, politics and the economy (see Andreasson 2008; for a thinly veiled endorsement of this kind of reverse racist, indeed ethnocentric, orientation, see Makgoba and Mubangizi 2010, especially the chapter on 'Leadership challenges').[3] By contrast, radical internationalisation envisages the spread of a more or less monolithic educational and socio economic culture and tends to ride roughshod over local or indigenous histories, values and cultural traditions (see Auf der Heyde 2005:41), on the basis of these societies' and cultures' purported lack of epistemic, moral and political education, if not backwardness and ignorance – in short, their proneness to superstition, blatant lack of democratic structure and institutions, and the like.[4]

I take it as fairly evident that neither of these positions holds much promise. Although the former errs in favour of increasing insularity and (self-)marginalisation, the latter errs in favour of dogmatic homogenisation and lack of regard for difference and diversity. More seriously still, apart from manifesting an essentialist conception of culture and identity (I return to this point later), both perpetuate a cycle of disregard, disrespect and intolerance, with ever-increasing stiffening of the opposing fronts. These are obviously little more than caricature characterisations. There are obviously more nuanced versions that deserve correspondingly serious consideration. Thus, in the instance

of indigenisation, there is an emphasis on the local that nonetheless acknowledges the significance, if not the inescapability, of the global.[5] Conversely, in the instance of internationalisation, the emphasis on the global is seen as compatible with (as perhaps even requiring) an acknowledgement of diversity, difference and locality, or indigeneity.[6] The latter position broadly characterises the motivation that gave birth to the Bologna Declaration – just insofar as this pledge can be characterised as a commitment to *globally* shared values etc.[7] – as well as post-Bologna initiatives by the Council of the European Union. More recently, the 3013th Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting in Brussels, which employed 'the term "internationalisation" … to refer to the development of international cooperation activities between EU higher education institutions and those in third countries' (Council of the European Union 2010:1, n. 1), articulated a commitment 'to returning knowledge to society at … the local, national and global level, thereby helping to meet society's needs and important social challenges' (p. 5).

Transformation as convergence: The Bologna Declaration and Europeanisation[8]

Perhaps I should commence with a discussion of pertinent aspects of the Protocol and its implications, as well as some of the criticisms that have been levelled against it during the past two decades. Among the central concerns of the Bologna Declaration are the transformation of higher educational systems and the transfer of educational knowledge and skills, as well as the possibility of active

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(footnote 2 continues...)
Africa at the centre', historically, culturally, philosophically and morally (Ani 1994; Schiele 1994:152). It encompasses the view that Africa is the cradle of humankind and the locus of the first great civilisations from which all others derive (Asante 1980:45, 1987:170; Seepe 2000; Van Sertima 1999). It teaches that Africa is the birthplace of technology, metallurgy, astronomy, mathematics, agricultural science and medicine (Asante 1980:45; Seepe 2000; Van Sertima 1999) and that African values have priority over European values. With regard to the latter, theorists like Molefi Kete Asante claim at times that African values are superior for Africans, just as Europeans deem European values to be superior (Asante 1980:54, 1987:62, 180), and at other times that African values are plainly superior (Asante 1980:9, 10, 1987:170).

3.One of the characteristics of this approach, 'normative entanglements', is that the rejection of Eurocentrism is linked to an explicit sympathy with the ethnocentrism of non-European cultures (Cesana 2000:452). As I have argued elsewhere (Horsthemke 2006:456), to respond to Eurocentrism by embracing Afrocentrism is relevantly like responding to school-ground bullying with corporal punishment or to murder with capital punishment. Motivational reasons do not amount to justification, in any of these cases.

4.Bernhard Dernburg, the first German colonial minister, provided an unapologetically frank definition of the enterprise of colonial expansion: colonisation is the harnessing of the soil, its natural resources, flora, fauna and especially of the people, all for the sake of the economy of the colonising nation, which in turn is obliged to make a return gift of its higher culture, its moral concepts and its superior methods (quoted in Grill 2003:79). One could also express this more bluntly: subjugation, exploitation, re-education. An interesting variation on this theme is found in Cameroonian exile Axelle Kabou who – in her book '*Et si l'Afrique refusait le développement*?' – blames not only autocratic rulers and the power-hungry and corrupt elites for Africa's ongoing misery but also (and especially) ordinary Africans, because of their refusal and rejection of development, progress and modernisation (Kabou 1991).

5.Thus, Masehela (2004), a research manager at the (South African) Human Sciences Research Council, writes: We [Africans] have to construct our own epistemological framework from which to we can explore ideas and build our own knowledge. … Africans must create our own paradigm from which we can also dialogue meaningfully with Europeans (p. 11). Makgoba (1997), vice-chancellor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, maintains, 'It is the duty of academics and scholars to internationalise, articulate, shape, develop and project the image, the values, the culture, the history and vision of the African people and their innovations through the eyes of Africans': African people should develop, write, communicate and interpret their theories, philosophies, in their own ways rather [than allow these to be] construed from foreign culture and visions' (p. 205). *Moreover*, global economic competition is high and unless we develop a competitive high technology economy we face economic ruin, stagnation and under-development, with dire consequences for the impoverished rural and urban communities (p. 179). Although the latter insight is surely correct, Makgoba does not elaborate on the assumption that 'Africanisation' is compatible with 'internationalisation', with developing 'a competitive high technology economy'. Further argument, too, is required to establish how an 'Afrocentric orientation' is supposed to cater for the demand, 'as we enter the era of globalisation, … to rethink ourselves anew, and bring in new ideas if we are to be a significant part of the information age and an era of knowledge industries' (Ntuli 2002:66) or with the 'need to develop people and prepare young South Africans for the future and the tough world of global competition' (Makgoba 2003:2).

6.According to Botha (2010), director of the School for Education Research and Engagement, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa: It is clear that internationalisation takes strong cognizance of the local culture, that, without the local, there would be nothing to offer the other and a strong local culture would enhance the value of internationalisation. The own and the other culture are, therefore, cornerstones of both internationalisation and Africanisation (pp. 208–209).

7.'The way of life of an economist, a scientists or a journalist is no longer simply German or French but, on the contrary, European or global' (Welsch 2000:337).

8.The Bologna Declaration has also been referred to as the Bologna *Protocol*. I use these terms interchangeably here. What is noteworthy about it is its commitment to convergence at a continental (European) level and to 'a Europe of knowledge' – which is why the envisaged transfer and transformation process can arguably be called 'Europeanisation'.

and meaningful engagement across historical, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and social borders.

The Bologna Declaration was a pledge by each of the 29 signatory countries:

- … A commitment freely taken to reform its own higher education system or systems in order to create overall convergence at European level. …
- The Bologna process … is not a path towards 'standardisation' or 'uniformisation' of European higher education. The fundamental principles of autonomy and diversity are respected.
- The Declaration reflects a search for a common European answer to common European problems. The process originates from the recognition that in spite of their valuable differences, European higher education systems are facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, the expansion of private and transnational education, etc. (The Bologna Declaration 1999:3).

The stated goal was to establish, by 2010, 'a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education' (p. 4). The set of specified objectives included the following:

- 'the adoption of a common framework of readable and comparable degrees; …
- the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate levels in all countries; …
- a European dimension in quality assurance, with comparable criteria and methods
- the elimination of remaining obstacles to the free mobility of students (as well as trainees and graduates) and teachers (as well as researchers and higher education administrators)' (p. 4).

In addition, the Declaration specifically recognises the fundamental values and the diversity of European higher education:

- 'it clearly acknowledges the necessary independence and autonomy of universities; …
- it stresses the need to achieve a common space for higher education within the framework of the diversity of cultures, languages and educational systems'. (p. 6).

According to the joint declaration of the European ministers of education in June 1999:

A Europe of knowledge is now widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the new

millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space. (p. 7)

Preceding the Bologna Declaration, the Sorbonne Declaration of 25 May 1998 stressed:

the universities' central role in developing European cultural dimensions. It emphasised the creation of the European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the Continent's overall development. (p. 7)

The main criticisms of the 'Bologna process', 10 years after it was initiated, point to the 'educational injustice' and the *Verschulung*[9] it has come to embody. In Germany, in particular, the introduction of the bachelor's and master's degrees has been widely criticised on the grounds of being too *verschult* – packed with exams and content material that require rote learning and cramming, thus allowing little reflection on what has been learnt. As Jan Martin Wiarda and Martin Spiewak have pointed out, this discussion has not been without contradictions. After all, the Humboldtian ideal of *Bildung* that used to underpin German academic life was exclusivist, elitist and prevented a vast majority from studying and further education. It was indeed the old system (with the *Diplom*, *Magister* and *Staatsexamen*) that favoured children of civil servants over those of unskilled and semi-skilled labourers at a ratio of 4:1, in terms of affording them the opportunity to study. This system was also characterised by high dropout rates and excessively long duration of studies (Meyer 2009:7[10]; Wiarda & Spiewak 2009:31). The new system has led to a drastic reduction of both duration of study and dropout rate (at least in the human and social sciences), and to a rise in the number of first-semester students. In addition, the exams at the end of each semester have replaced the all-important, all-encompassing final exam.

This, however, has meant not only an increase in bureaucracy and administrative work (see Schily 2009:46) but also more contact time lecturers and professors are required to devote to greater numbers of students. Many universities in Germany have somehow missed the boat and, frequently, the old content is squeezed into new courses and curricula (Wiarda & Spiewak 2009:31). The net result is that both students and lecturers complain about performance and achievement stress (this was one of the main issues of contention during the *Bildungsstreik*

9. *Verschulung* has somewhat pejorative connotations: it means 'schoolification' (say, of a given system, educational or other), and in particular the rigidity, rule-governedness, and bureaucratic and administrative workload associated with strongly regulated institutions and processes.

10. In an article otherwise highly critical of the changes the German tertiary educational system has undergone in the wake of the Bologna Declaration, Hans Joachim Meyer, former minister of science and art in the German federal state of Saxony, also points out that under the old system there were many students who considered an unlimited university sojourn, without corresponding demands on their performance or achievement, a basic human right (Meyer 2009:7). In essence, however, Meyer laments the death of the Humboldtian University. He detects in the introduction of English terminology in reports, proposals, symbols and degrees a systematic displacement of the German language from Germany's academic and scientific life. This poses, he argues, the acute dangers of both intellectual self-expropriation and separation of science and society. Meyer blames 'the left' for promoting the distancing from all things German, because of a 'national self-distrust and multicultural tendencies', a 'near-hysterical fear of a new *Wilhelminism*' (p. 7). He equally blames 'the right' for its long-time uncritical infatuation with America.

several years ago[11]) – even though studies have indicated that the actual workloads have not increased (Wiarda & Spiewak 2009). What has happened, however, is that the more rigid structures have robbed many of a sense of autonomy or self-determination, and consequently of a sense of joy or excitement about studying. The response has been to make the customary three-year bachelor a four-year degree and to facilitate semester-long studies abroad.

A further related trend, which concerns not students but rather academics, has been towards establishing an equivalence between excellence in teaching and excellence in research, the idea being to reward those who increasingly spend time teaching, supervising and otherwise helping students, rather than exclusively or primarily those who excel in research (p. 32).

Finger (2009) laments the gradual disappearance of 'knowledge for its own sake' and of the 'fostering or nurturing of genius', in favour of competitiveness, mobility and economic marketability – in short, quicker turnaround, turnover and efficiency (Finger 2009; see also Schily 2009:46). Social and scientific progress, she says, do not occur on the basis of rules and regulations – historically, their protagonists have been outsiders. This is a further reason why we need to encourage the reintroduction of a broad education, a spirit that is free from prejudice, a solid foundation for critical inquiry and interrogation. 'We need intellectual openness and education for thinking much more than we need *Verschulung*', according to Finger (2009):

> A basic ideal of our culture is under threat from the increasing homogenisation of the university: namely the esteem for learnedness, the high regard for knowledge in and for itself – irrespective of whether it 'pays' in the foreseeable future.

Whether internationalisation is inherently interwoven with a process of devaluing knowledge to an instrumental role and with *Verschulung* is, of course, subject to debate.

Transformation as resistance: Africanisation and Afrocentrism

If Finger is right about the disregard in the new system for the inherent value of knowledge (as contrasted with its purely instrumental value), then this is a trait that the drive towards a 'Europe of knowledge' shares with advocacy of Africanisation. This pertains not only to political leaders opening tertiary institutions in liberated African countries in the 1950s and 1960s, but also and especially to theorists and academics emphasising the need for higher education to develop an African identity (see, e.g., Adams 2005; Dowling & Seepe 2004; Makgoba 1998; Mthembu 2004; Nabudere 2006; Nyerere 1964; Soudien 2009; Touré 1963; Yesufu 1973).[12] There

are further, remarkable parallels between the Bologna Declaration and the call for the Africanisation of higher education: emphasis on the 'Africanisation' of knowledge and on finding 'African answers to African problems', the endeavour to make 'the African university' internationally attractive and competitive, to establish international respect for Africa's rich and extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions, and so on. The major difference is that 'Africanisation' and 'Afrocentrism' emanate less from the political or economic precedent of the 'African Union', and the common objectives of convergence and transnational mobility, than from a (shared) rejection of 'the European education system' and 'Eurocentrism'. Although the Bologna Declaration may be interpreted as a call to unity by harnessing Europe's many strengths, the emphasis in Africanisation (and Afrocentrism) is more on unity as a means of resistance. This characterises, for example, the ongoing '#RhodesMustFall' and '#FeesMustFall' protest movements at South African higher learning institutions against 'white colonial structures' and the calls for a 'free, quality, decolonised education for black students'.[13]

Closely associated with educational and institutional transformation, 'Africanisation' embodies traits of both internationalisation and indigenisation. The former link may be more controversial – for is Africanisation not meant to counteract the dictates of internationalism in education, knowledge and the economy? However, 'Africanisation of education' has a clearly *international* element ('between nations and nation states'), just like 'Europeanisation of education' has. Moreover, the idea of 'Africanisation of knowledge' bears more than a fleeting resemblance to the Bologna Declaration's internationalist reference to a 'Europe of knowledge'. 'Africanisation' binds together a plethora of not only sub-Saharan nations and states. The deceased, former Libyan head of state Muammar Gaddafi's vision of a 'United States of Africa', with himself as Emperor of Africa, may have been a delusional, autocratic fantasy – but at least the first part of it is (still) shared by many. Coupled with this desire for pan-African unity are the frequent appeals to communalism as a 'typically African value' and reference to the 'essence', 'identity and culture of Africa' (note the singular).

11. http://www.bildungsstreik.net/aufruf-zum-bildungsstreik-fur-solidaritat-und-freie-bildung/aufruf/strike-call/ (last accessed 27 July 2016).

12. According to Makgoba (1997): 'The issue of pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and the so-called standards have … become contentious factors around the African university. … The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake has been one of the cornerstones of university education; but, is there such a thing as knowledge for its own sake today? Knowledge is a human construction that by definition has a human purpose. Knowledge cannot be sterile or neutral in its conception, formulation and development. Humans are not generally renowned for their neutrality or sterility. The generation and development of knowledge is thus contextual in nature' (p. 177).

That knowledge ascription and justification have a crucial contextual component is surely not in doubt (see Horsthemke 2004), but this does not mean that (the pursuit of) knowledge must be described and explained in consequentialist or constructivist terms. It might be the *object* of knowledge that is and continues to be the legitimate cornerstone of higher education. 'The global competition, the involvement of industry in universities, the social, economic and political pressures of modern society, have made the [pursuit of knowledge for its own sake] obsolete', says Makgoba. 'The pursuit of knowledge and the truth with a purpose and social responsibility is what universities are about' (Makgoba 1997:181, 182). Surely setting up a commission like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission also involved a non-instrumental understanding of knowledge and truth (see Horsthemke 2004). If they had an exclusively instrumental function, then substituting them would be entirely permissible – say, with an 'amnesia drug' – as long as the desired end/effect/outcome was the same. With regard to the traditional roles that universities throughout the world have in society, Makgoba (1997) mentions: 'the preservation, the imparting and the generation of knowledge. … It is important to recognise … that the imparting of inappropriate or irrelevant education, even of the highest calibre, would … lead to a poor and ineffective product. Thus university education has to be relevant not only to the people, but also to the culture and environment in which it is being imparted' (p. 179).
Without doubt: the trick, of course, is to avoid an education (system) that is impoverished as a result of excessive concerns with 'people's culture' and 'user-friendliness'.

13. See, for example, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeO1pXzqr30

On the contrary, there is a strong emphasis in 'Africanisation' and 'Afrocentrism' on indigenous, local – as contrasted with, say, 'global', 'international', 'European' or 'Eurocentric' – educational knowledge, practices and values. For example, there is a frequent endorsement of African mathematics as 'ethnomathematics' or African knowledge systems as 'indigenous knowledge systems' – as augmenting academic or 'mainstream' mathematics and 'world knowledge', respectively. The African *is* the indigene: colonised, exploited, marginalised and historically excluded from the international mainstream.

Soudien (2009) writes that:

> at the centre of epistemological transformation is curriculum reform – a reorientation away from the apartheid knowledge system, in which curriculum was used as a tool of exclusion, to a democratic curriculum that is inclusive of all human thought. (p. 89)

Something he later refers to as 'the Africanisation of the curriculum' (p. 91). Resistance to Africanisation, he contends, 'is often advanced under the guise of a spurious argument suggesting that the debate is not about privileging western scholarship, but rather emphasising the universality of knowledge' (Soudien 2009:91; for a critical examination of the Africanisation of the curriculum and of knowledge, see Horsthemke 2004). It is 'the local context' that 'must become the point of departure for knowledge-building in universities' across Africa and, indeed, 'the world' (Soudien 2009:92).

Problems with internationalisation and indigenisation

The notion of internationalisation involves the assumption that the worldwide trend of cultures and societies is towards increasing synchronisation of local environments – presumably following the Western model. This is clearly not a wholly accurate assumption, as evidenced by the complementary development or resurgence of indigenisation, and particular phenomena like Africanisation. Despite its lip service to 'diversity', 'differentiation' and 'particularities', internationalisation is by its very nature ultimately unable to accommodate these differences and counter-currents, especially if and where these are at odds with its central tenets (e.g. where they are manifestations of religious fundamentalism and involve non-democratic practices), like openness, public accountability, tolerance and portability. A less favourable view considers this rival trend to be a bothersome, regressive phenomenon that, however, is facing imminent extinction.

Indigenisation, in contrast, involves what German cultural theorist Wolfgang Welsch has referred to as the 'return of tribes' (Welsch 2000:349) and may be interpreted as a reaction against globalisation. Given the historical, political and socio economic background (more often than not colonial or other expansionist exploitation and oppression) that has given rise to and that motivates and explains indigenisation, the eagerness of people to return to what they perceive to be the sources of their cultural identity, their 'roots', is perfectly understandable. Although this desire to (re)turn to and (re)embrace local values and indigenous traditions (educational and other) is not implausible,[14] the move towards indigenisation has produced some collateral damage. Compounded by problems emanating from unhelpful immigration legislation and occasional bouts of xenophobia (or more accurately, violent actions against foreigners), there has been no transfer, exchange and mobility on the African continent comparable to that within, or produced by, European higher education. Instead, the net result has been a marginalisation not only of the continent as a whole but also in terms of increasing isolation of sub-Saharan African countries from each other. Indeed, these policies of indigenisation may exacerbate existing societal divisions and lead to new forms of intolerance and discrimination (see Andreasson 2008[15]; Chetty 2010, on reverse 'racist rhetoric' and 'growing Zulu nationalism').

An additional problem with both internationalisation and indigenisation is that these approaches commit what might be called the fallacy of the collective singular. This is an essentialist fallacy that pervades reference to, say, 'German culture', 'European identity', 'the African university', 'the essence of Africa' and the like. The Bologna Declaration also seems to contain what Welsch has defined as 'the traditional concept of culture', where cultures are seen as separate and distinct 'islands' or closed 'spheres' (Welsch 2000:330):

> The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions. (The Bologna Declaration 1999:7; for a similar conception, see Botha 2010: n. 8)

In fact, neither internationalisation nor indigenisation appears to be able to do full justice to the ways in which culture and identity are transferred, developed and transformed. It also remains unclear how these approaches could satisfactorily account for the worldwide attractiveness of 'the European' or 'the African' higher education system, respectively. What is almost certainly true, moreover, is that the profit motive that dominates our world, and education in particular, has pushed other, democratically crucial competences to the periphery – like the capacity for critical scrutiny and interrogation, to transcend traditions and local loyalties and to approach global problems as a *Weltbürger* (to see oneself as a member of a pluralistic or heterogeneous

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14. Indigenisation has provided, argues Stefan Andreasson (2008), a way for governments to anchor their policies in a culturally acceptable context which lends legitimacy to its policies and rule. It does so by providing African citizens with a sense of 'ownership' and participation in policymaking, which may in turn enhance social stability in an otherwise volatile context of a post-colonial struggle to improve living conditions, while at the same time addressing the concerns of both (global) economic interests and (local) populist pressures.

15. Andreasson mentions Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe as an example in this regard, where indigenisation has been more directly focused on redistribution of ownership and control of public institutions, coupled with an overtly intolerant rhetoric directed by government against those minority groups to whom the concept of indigeneity is deemed not to apply (Andreasson 2008, 2010).

nation, and world), and to imaginatively put oneself in the shoes of those who are perhaps less fortunate, at any rate different from oneself.

Multiculturality and interculturality

In Welsch's analysis, the traditional notion of culture is characterised by three pillars: social homogenisation, an ethnic foundation and cultural delimitation (Welsch 2000:329). The problem, in a nutshell, is that the depiction of cultures as separate, distinct islands or self-contained spheres is both unrealistic and normatively dangerous. It is unrealistic, because it is descriptively and empirically weak, if not altogether mistaken. Throughout human history, there has been extensive transsemination, or cross-fertilisation, among cultures and civilisations. Even during the times of 18th century German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (to whom Welsch attributes this notion[16]), there would have been few, if any, cultures completely untouched, uninfluenced or not otherwise inspired by coexisting cultures. The idea of single cultures is also normatively dangerous because of its proximity to ethnocentrism and to what might be called 'culturism' (cultural racism, elitism or exclusivism).

As a result of acknowledging the significance of these problems, both empirical and normative, two trends have developed (not least in educational theory) in the latter half of the 20th century to account for the ever-increasing transsemination, cross-fertilisation and, importantly, the promotion of recognition, tolerance and respect among human beings. Both trends, multiculturality and interculturality, seek to transcend the narrow confines of the traditional concept and to foster mutual understanding among cultures. The question, for the purposes of my inquiry, is whether either of these ideas provide a resolution to the apparent impasse in the internationalisation–indigenisation debate.

Welsch argues, correctly I believe, that both concepts are problematic in that their very structure (one might say, more accurately, their grammar) still presupposes the very notion of single cultures they purportedly repudiate. The idea of multiculturality emphasises the coexistence of different cultures within one and the same society. Although this constitutes an improvement on the demand for social homogenisation, multiculturality is unable to address the resultant problems of this cultural plurality. It is not able to do so because of its conception of this multitude of cultures as individually homogeneous. In fact, all it implies is the mere fact of coexistence – it says, or can say, very little about transsemination, whether descriptively or prescriptively. It comes as no surprise, says Welsch, that circumstances in the United States should have entailed some kind of justification of and increasing appeals to intercultural delimitation by theorists of multiculturality (Welsch cites Amy Gutmann and Will Kymlicka, among others; Welsch 2000:333, n. 20).

The idea of interculturality[17] does not appear to fare much better, for very similar reasons. It does go beyond emphasising mere coexistence of different cultures, by concerning itself with the issue of difficulty in cooperation and collaboration (see Council of the European Union 2010:2) – but it, too, conceptually presupposes the traditional conception of single, distinct cultures. Therefore, the problems it hopes to address must remain elusive – since they arise because of the very presupposition that cultures are separate islands or self-contained spheres. The diagnosis of intercultural conflict is followed by advocacy of intercultural dialogue – yet, the basic problem remains, encapsulated in the thesis of essential separateness or distinctness of the conflicting and dialoguing cultures (see Welsch 2000:334–335). Thus, any of the envisaged 'changes' would ultimately be little more than cosmetic.

But is this thesis, which not only constitutes the traditional conception of culture but also underlies the ideas of multiculturality and interculturality, correct? If it is, then the problems of the coexistence and cooperation or collaboration of different cultures would remain with us – and would arguably remain unsolvable.

Transculturality

In this section, I wish to gesture towards the notion of *Transkulturalität*, 'transculturality', as a realistic and defensible response to the apparent impasse created in the indigenisation versus internationalisation debate about educational transfer and transformation. Although he has perhaps not authored it (Hansen 2000:296, 297; Welsch 1992:5, 2000:336, n. 27), Welsch has certainly popularised this concept. The central thesis is that the conception espoused in the traditional view of culture, and more or less unintentionally adopted or presupposed by the views that have succeeded it, is simply false. In other words, the depiction of cultures as islands or spheres is factually incorrect and normatively deceptive. Our cultures, Welsch suggests (Welsch 2000:335), no longer have the purported form of homogeneity and separateness but are, instead, characterised by mixtures and permeations. Welsch describes this new structure of cultures as 'transcultural' – insofar as the determinants of culture now traverse (i.e. go through) cultures, and cross their traditional boundaries, and insofar as the new form transcends (i.e. goes beyond) the traditional conception.

The understanding of transculturality so explained applies both on a macro level, pertaining to the changed (and changing) configuration of present-day cultures, and on a micro level, referring to the cultural make-up and shape of individuals. The mixtures and permeations that characterise our cultures are the result of technological advances, communication and

16.Among those who have endorsed this conception are Sumner (1907) and Benedict (1934).

17.See, for example, the discussions in Adhar Mall (1996:8, 2000:307, 310); Cesana (2000:437/8, 455); Hansen (2000:290, 294, 298); Waldenfels (2000:246/7, 250, 253, 255/6); and Wimmer (2000). Ram Adhar Mall, in particular, defends 'intercultural philosophy' against Welsch's objections – which, it ought to be emphasised, do not concern intercultural philosophy but rather the idea of interculturality. Although Wim van Binsbergen endorses both intercultural philosophy and the idea of interculturality, his understanding appears to be much closer to Welsch's notion of transculturality (see Van Binsbergen 2003, esp. ch. 15).

travel, economic connectivity and dependencies, and – even more recently, and importantly – of the increasing democratisation of societies. Examples of these permeations include moral and social issues and states of awareness that characterise many, if not all, allegedly different cultures: the debates about human and non-human (animal) rights, feminist thinking, and ecological consciousness, to mention only a few. Examples from commercial interaction (transactions), sport and popular culture abound. As Welsch puts it, contemporary cultures are generally marked by 'hybridisation' (p. 337). Nonetheless, I do not quite agree with him when he claims that the grounds for selectivity between own culture and foreign (or other) culture have all but disappeared and (in a reinvention of Rimbaud's '*Je est un autre*') that:

> there is little, if anything, that is strictly 'foreign' or 'other'; everything is within reach. By the same token, there is little, if anything, that can be called 'own': Authenticity has become folklore. It is owwness simulated for others, to whom the indigene himself has long come to belong. (p. 337)

The Truth and Reconciliation process, underpinned as it was by a commitment to restorative justice, was historically and recognisably South African – even though it has been successfully applied, and has transformed judicial thinking and practice, globally. Similarly, knowledge of the thirst- and appetite-suppressing qualities of the *!khoba* cactus (or *Hoodia gordonii*) originated with the San community, although the product has since been commercialised and is now available at pharmacies all over the world. I do not mean to suggest here that this points to the manifestation and plausibility of ideas like 'local justice' or 'indigenous knowledge' – not at all, in fact! – but rather that Welsch's assertion, 'The regional-specific is increasingly nothing but décor, surface, aesthetic production' (p. 337, n. 28), is neither compelling nor necessary to make the case for transculturality on a macro (i.e. societal) level.

Transculturality also operates on a micro (i.e. individual) level. The vast majority of human beings are constituted in their cultural formations by a multitude of cultural origins, affiliations and connections. 'We are cultural hybrids', as Welsch puts it (p. 339): we may have a particular national identity, but we have a multitude of cultural identities. For example, I am a German who has lived and worked in South Africa for most of his life, a heterosexual vegan atheist, former professional rock and jazz musician, with a love of Italian, Mexican and Indian food, Native American, Celtic and Japanese music, Czech and Finnish cinema, a preference for Anglo-American analytical philosophy, and married to a QiGong instructor who prepares our minestrone according to the Five Elements, and with whom I have two sons with traditional Sotho and Zulu names. The list could be continued with numerous other examples, and I suspect something very similar may be true for a surprisingly large number of people. But does this prove Welsch's point about transcultural identities? Does my love of Indian food translate into a desire to live in Mumbai or into an endorsement of the existing caste system? Does one's fondness of travelling in Russia signal support for the state's incarceration of the band

members of Pussy Riot? Hardly. Furthermore, I admit that for every example that might be cited to suggest that globalisation is stirring up the 'cultural pot', one could think of many poor, uneducated and generally disadvantaged members from various cultures who (despite external influences) have not changed much over the years in terms of interests, expectations, goals, rules, customs, and so on.

So, does transculturality yield a promising philosophical perspective on transmission of knowledge and practices, and on the transformation of educational systems? I would suggest, cautiously, that it does. (Consider, for example, the manifest cross-pollination between Tchokwe *sona* sand drawings, Zulu pottery and bead work, and Ndebele murals, and mainstream mathematical thinking. Consider also the mission of South African astrophysicist Thebe Medupe to connect occidental science and astronomy to the cosmological models of some of the oldest civilisations on earth, namely as practised by the Jul'hoansi in north-eastern Namibia, the Dogon in Mali, and finally the Nabtans in the southern Egyptian Sahara, nomadic pastoralists, now long dead.[18]) But this verdict does not only signal a fairly modest movement in the direction of the 'melding' of cultures; it may also require some additional conceptual clarification. Welsch asserts that transculturality is itself a temporary diagnosis, which refers to a transition or rather a phase within a transition (p. 341, n. 37). It takes as its starting point the traditional idea of single cultures and maintains that this idea – whatever the appeal it may still hold for many – no longer applies, at least not to the vast majority of contemporary cultures. The concept of transculturality seeks to capture an understanding of a contemporary and future constitution of cultures that is no longer monocultural but transcultural. This does not mean that the concept of culture has become empty: according to Welsch, it makes good sense to speak of a coexistence of 'reference cultures' (*Bezugskulturen*) and of new, transcultural nets (or webs) that emanate from these.

An objection that might be raised at this point may take the form of the 'argument from entropy' – that the ever-increasing transsemination will itself logically lead to a kind of homogenisation, that the erstwhile 'individual' (trans) cultural systems will become indistinguishable from one another, and that transculturality will level out in a kind of bland pan-cultural sameness, a global closed system. The argument is that not only will the idea of 'cultures' have been rendered redundant but the very notion of transculturality will also have ceased to apply. It would appear that Welsch himself has brought on this objection, by claiming that 'the diagnosis of transculturality is itself a temporary diagnosis'. However, further elucidation shows that the new 'reference cultures' will themselves have transcultural configurations that are the reference point for the weaving of new transcultural webs. In addition, the different individual, social, geographical-environmental, historical-political contexts will more than ensure that an entropic end state is highly unlikely to be bought about. This brings me to my last point: conceptual clarification and the role of philosophy.

18.The 2003 film *Cosmic Africa*, by South African brothers Craig and Damon Foster and concept originator and key researcher Anne Rogers, documents this journey.

Philosophy of education and the role of the university

One of the most important functions of philosophy is arguably that of tireless critical interrogation – not only of concepts but also of premises, beliefs, values, assumptions and commitments – and, by inquiring into their meaning and justification, not to mention their truth, to attempt to resolve some of the most fundamental ontological, epistemological, ethical and indeed educational questions (Wimmer 2000:413, 414). How does educational transmission of, say, mathematical and scientific concepts and principles take place, especially in the context of indigenisation, internationalisation and transculturality? What are the influences on curriculum and syllabus selection; what are the relevant differences within the educational systems in the countries on the African continent? What are the implications for teacher training, for the choice of textbooks; how do indigenisation and internationalisation impact on the classroom experience; and what exactly is the promise of transculturality in this regard? These are just some of the questions a longer, more in-depth and, crucially, empirical study would need to address.

As Thomas Auf der Heyde (former dean of research, University of Johannesburg) has pointed out, universities clearly stand to benefit from globalisation (Auf der Heyde 2005:41, 43, 44, 48) – so, from an economic point of view, the question whether they are justified in embracing globalisation (e.g. the so-called 'knowledge economy') receives a quick and simple answer. The more interesting and difficult question is in what way, if any, their role as social observer and commentator, and their responsibility to critically reflect on the phenomenon of globalisation (Auf der Heyde 2005), can be made to complement the interest of the state, the universities' key stakeholders and so on. If Auf der Heyde is correct in saying that 'universities … should also be critically appraising the issues raised by [globalisation]' (p. 41), then this is where philosophy of education arguably has its natural home.[19] The role of philosophy consists in part if counteracting the hegemony and despotism of both homogenising ('colonising') and traditional ('indigenising') authority.

The Einstein quotation at the beginning of the article might, I believe, be read as a precursor of the idea of transculturality. 'Striving for universality of mind and spirit', which according to Einstein constitutes 'the fundamental role of the university', should not be understood as 'striving for homogeneity' or uniformity (*contra* Cesana[20]) but, rather, for *trans*versality.

19. In this regard, we may also recall Finger's plea for 'intellectual openness and education for thinking' and what she referred to as the requisite philosophical arsenal: 'a broad education, an unbiased spirit, a well-founded ability to critique' (Finger 2009).

20. After explaining the concept of cultural pluralism, as referring to a plurality of forms of knowledge and experience (he distinguishes between *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* here, between practical or professional and lived experience), the differences between which are determined by the specific historical-cultural situation, Cesana claims that the standpoint of universalism is essentially anti-pluralist (Cesana 2000:458). I would argue that this is not at all obvious. One might deem implausible the idea of indigenous knowledge (to say nothing of 'local truth') but at the same time acknowledge the context dependence of the justification of knowledge claims. Similarly, one can be a universalist about the crises and challenges that face us, and our planet, but at the same time a cultural pluralist about the solutions. For reasons given above, however, I believe the notion of transculturality to be preferable to that of cultural plurality, on both empirical and normative grounds. In addition, I suggest an interpretation of universalism as transversalism, in order to sever it from any connotation with uniformity.

Striving for universality in the sense of transversality should be, in Einstein's (2003) words:

> unrestrained by national or other political motivations. … If the universities remain true to their fundamental task, they may contribute significantly to the solution of the crises which threaten us today.

'Universality of mind and spirit', I suggest, refers to an awareness that 'we are all in it together'. The crises and challenges, both economic and environmental, we face today may be different from those to which Einstein was referring in 1951, but the gist of his Princeton address about the fundamental task of the university is still pertinent.

Acknowledgement

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