

**Indigenisation, internationalisation, and *Transkulturalität*:  
Approaches to transmission and transformation in education**

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## **Indigenisation, internationalisation, and *Transkulturalität*: Approaches to transmission and transformation in education**

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)

***Introduction: Philosophy, transfer and transmission in education.*** Philosophy might be claimed, cautiously, to be *one* of the deliberative and critical resources that ought to be brought to bear on the transfer and transformation of educational systems, knowledge, concepts and practices, if such processes are to be justifiable, consistent and effective. I say ‘cautiously’, because the contribution that philosophy can offer is likely to be modest – for at least two reasons. First, philosophy is only one of the ‘deliberative and critical resources’ relevant to educational transfer and transformation. Second, deliberation and criticism may be necessary but are not sufficient for the justifiability, consistency and effectiveness of the processes in question: there are vast and significant contingencies in context and practice that are likely to remain decisive.<sup>1</sup>

A promising approach to establishing the appropriate contribution of philosophy of education in this regard (and here I follow suggestions made by Terence McLaughlin, albeit in a different regard<sup>2</sup>) is arguably to focus on the ‘embeddedness’ of philosophical considerations in (many) processes driving transfer and transformation. Many of these contain, to a greater or lesser extent, concepts, beliefs, values, assumptions and commitments that, although they themselves may not be of a directly philosophical kind, can be subjected to philosophical scrutiny and analysis.

***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 education. These changes concern not only how education, its

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, there are also recent examples of critical interrogation of efficiency, planning and control as ‘ends-in-themselves’ or inherently valuable. Where these have been elevated to guiding principles of exclusive validity, argues Konrad Schily, German politician and founder and ex-director of the Private University of Witten-Herdecke, it should come as no surprise that students bring efficiency, planning and control to bear on their intellectual and temporal resources – i.e. that they become increasingly conformist (Schily 2009, 46).

<sup>2</sup> See McLaughlin 2000, 443-444. His focus is on the contribution philosophy can make with respect to educational policy and its analysis.

nature and its aims, is (to be) conceptualised, but also the very transfer and transmission of educational systems, knowledge, concepts and practices.

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 theories reject any claim to validity or legitimacy by the rival approach. Thus, radical indigenisation involves a ‘back to the roots’-type of traditionalism and/ or nationalism that are more often than not inspired by the colonial experience and/ or the need for political consolidation, respectively. Examples of this response include radical forms of Africanism and Afrocentrism<sup>3</sup>, which tend to reject 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 and 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, mobilization and justification, but also as a tool in transformation, educational, socio-economic and cultural. As such, it becomes symbolic, and may actually produce a virulent form, of the ‘ethnisation’ of education, politics and the economy (see Andreasson 2008, 7).<sup>4</sup> 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/ indigenous histories, values and cultural traditions (see Auf der Heyde 2005, 41), on the basis of these societies’ and cultures’ 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.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 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. It means ‘placing Africa at the centre’, historically, culturally, philosophically and morally (Schiele 1994, 152; Ani 1994). 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; Asante 1987, 170; van Sertima 1999; Seepe 2000). It teaches that Africa is the birthplace of technology, metallurgy, astronomy, mathematics, agricultural science and medicine (Asante 1980, 45; van Sertima 1999; Seepe 2000), 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; Asante 1987, 62, 180), and at other times that African values are plainly superior (Asante 1980, 9, 10; Asante 1987, 170).

<sup>4</sup> One of the characteristics of this approach, one of its ‘normative entanglements’, is that the rejection of Eurocentrism is linked to an express sympathy with the ethnocentrism of non-European cultures (Cesana 2000, 452). As I have argued elsewhere, 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 (see ... 2006, 456).

<sup>5</sup> Bernhard Dernburg, the first German colonial minister, provided a 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 booklet ‘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).

I take it as fairly evident that neither of these positions holds much promise. While 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 ossification of the opposing fronts.

So much for the caricatures. 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.<sup>6</sup> 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/ indigenosity. The latter position broadly characterises the motivation that gave birth to the Bologna Declaration – just insofar as the this pledge can be characterised as a commitment to *globally* shared values etc.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Transformation as convergence: The Bologna Declaration and Europeanisation.***

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 leveled against it during the past decade. After all, the central concerns of the Bologna Declaration are among the issues discussed at the present conference: not only the transformation of educational systems and the transfer of educational knowledge, but also the possibility of active and meaningful engagement across historical, social, cultural and linguistic borders.

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

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<sup>6</sup> Thus, Kgabo Masehela, a research manager at the (South African) Human Sciences Research Council, writes in an article in the Johannesburg newspaper *This Day*,

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. (Masehela 2004, 11)

Malegapuru Makgoba, 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. (Makgoba 1997, 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. (Makgoba 1997, 179)

While 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 2000, 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).

<sup>7</sup> 'The way of life of an economist, a scientist or a journalist is no longer simply German or French but, on the contrary, *European or global*' (Welsch 2000, 337; emphasis added).

- ... 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; emphasis in original)

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’ (*ibid*, 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). (*ibid*, 4; emphasis in original)

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. (*ibid*, 6; emphasis in original)

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. (*ibid*, 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. (*ibid*)

The main criticisms of the process, ten years after it was initiated, point to the 'educational injustice' and the *Verschulung*<sup>8</sup> it has come to embody. In Germany in particular, the introduction of the Bachelor and Master 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 in a recent article in *Die Zeit*, 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 workers 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 (Wiarda & Spiewak 2009, 31; Meyer 2009, 7<sup>9</sup>). 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 draconian, 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 has been one of the main issues of contention during the recent *Bildungsstreik*) – even though studies have indicated that the actual workloads have not increased (*ibid*). 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 trend 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,

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<sup>8</sup> *Verschulung* has somewhat pejorative connotations: it means 'school-likeness' (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.

<sup>9</sup> 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*' (*ibid*). He equally blames 'the right' for its long-time uncritical infatuation with America.

supervising and otherwise helping students, rather than exclusively or primarily those who excel in research (*ibid*, 32).

In another article in *Die Zeit*, Evelyn Finger (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 (*ibid*; 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 (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. (*ibid*)

***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 recently liberated African countries in the 1950s and 1960s, but also and especially of contemporary theorists and academics emphasizing the need for higher education to develop an African identity (see, for example, Touré 1963; Nyerere 1964; Yesufu 1973; Makgoba 1998; Dowling & Seepe 2003; Mthembu 2004; Adams 2005; and Nabudere 2006).<sup>10</sup> There

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<sup>10</sup> According to Makgoba,

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. (Makgoba 1997, 177)

That knowledge ascription and justification have a crucial contextual component is surely not in doubt (see ... 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 ... 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 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. (Makgoba 1997, 179)

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, etc. The major difference is that ‘Africanisation’ and ‘Afrocentrism’ emanate less from the political/ 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’. While 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.

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/ 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. Libyan head of state Muammar Gaddafi’s vision of a ‘United States of Africa’, with himself as Emperor of Africa, may be a delusional, autocratic fantasy – but at least the first part of it is shared by many. Coupled with this desire for pan-African unity are the frequent appeal to communalism as a ‘typically African value’ and reference to the ‘essence’, ‘identity and culture of Africa’ (note the singular).

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

***Problems with internationalisation and indigenisation.*** The notion of internationalisation involves the assumption that the worldwide trend of cultures and societies is towards increasing homogenisation 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’, and however benevolent its motivation and intentions, 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 (for example, where they are manifestations of religious

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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’.

fundamentalism, involve non-democratic practices, etc.). A less favourable view considers this rival trend to be a bothersome, regressive phenomenon that, however, is facing imminent extinction.

Indigenisation, on the other hand, 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 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. While this desire to (re)turn to and (re)embrace local values and indigenous traditions (educational and other) is not implausible<sup>11</sup>, the move towards indigenisation has produced some collateral damage. 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’ (Andreasson 2009, 7<sup>12</sup>).

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’, ‘Asian humility’, 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; emphasis added)

In fact, neither internationalisation nor indigenisation appears to be able to do 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.

***Multiculturalism and interculturalism.*** In Welsch’s analysis, the traditional notion of culture is characterised by three pillars: social homogenisation, an ethnic foundation

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<sup>11</sup> Indigenisation has provided, argues Stefan Andreasson, 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 policy-making, 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. (Andreasson 2008, 7)

<sup>12</sup> Andreasson mentions Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe as an example in this regard, where indigenisation ‘has been more directly focussed 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, 8).

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 among cultures and civilisations. Even during the times of 18<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (to whom Welsch attributes this notion<sup>13</sup>), 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 what might be called ‘culturism’ (cultural racism, elitism or exclusivism).

Given recognition of the significance of these problems, both empirical and normative, there have been two trends (not least in educational theory) in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to account for the ever-increasing transsemination and, importantly, to promote recognition, tolerance and respect among human beings. Both multiculturalism and interculturalism seek to transcend the narrow confines of the traditional concept and to foster mutual understanding among cultures. For the purposes of my inquiry, does either of these ideas provide a resolution to the 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 multiculturalism emphasises the coexistence of different cultures within one and the same society. While this constitutes an improvement on the demand for social homogenisation, multiculturalism 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 homogenous. 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 multiculturalism (Welsch cites Amy Gutmann and Will Kymlicka, amongst others; Welsch 2000, 333 n.20).

The idea of interculturalism<sup>14</sup> 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 – 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

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<sup>13</sup> More recent (20<sup>th</sup> century) theorists who have endorsed this conception are William Graham Sumner and Ruth Benedict.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, the discussions in Adhar Mall 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 said, do not concern *intercultural philosophy* but rather *the idea of interculturalism*.

Welsch 2000, 334-335). Thus, any of the envisaged ‘changes’ would ultimately be little more than cosmetic.

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

***Transkulturalität.*** In this section I wish to endorse the notion of *Transkulturalität*, ‘transculturality’, as a realistic and defensible response to the impasse created in the indigenisation vs. internationalisation debate about educational transfer and transformation. Although he has perhaps not authored it (*ibid*, 336 n.27; see also Hansen 2000, 296, 297), 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 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 nonhuman 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’ (*ibid*, 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 oneness simulated for others, to whom the indigene himself has long come to belong. (*ibid*)

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 gordinii*) 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’ (*ibid*, 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 (*ibid*, 339). We may have a particular national identity, but we have a multitude of cultural identities. For example, I am a German living and working in South Africa, a heterosexual vegetarian 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 an overwhelmingly large number of people.

So, does transculturality yield a pertinent philosophical perspective on transmission of knowledge and practices, and on the transformation of educational systems? I would suggest, cautiously, that it does. But this verdict may 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 (*ibid*, 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 (*ibid*). 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.

***Philosophy of education and the role of the university.*** French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari claim, ‘La philosophie [...] est la discipline qui consiste à créer des concepts’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1991, 10). Far more, one might argue: apart

from its task being the creation of concepts (*if it is that!*), philosophy – including philosophy of education – helps in determining the appropriateness or applicability of concepts, their interconnectedness, role in argumentation, etc. 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 and ethical questions. (See McLaughlin 2000, 444, 448; Wimmer 2000, 413, 414.)

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., of the 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 (*ibid*), can be made to complement the interest of the state, the universities' key stakeholders, etc. If Auf der Heyde is correct in saying that 'universities ... should also be critically appraising the issues raised by [globalisation]' (*ibid*, 41), then this is where philosophy of education arguably has its natural home.<sup>15</sup> The role of philosophy consists in part in counteracting the hegemony and despotism of both homogenising ('colonising') and traditional ('indigenising') authority.

The Einstein quotation at the beginning of the paper 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<sup>16</sup>). Striving for universality, Einstein says, should be  
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. (Einstein 2003; emphasis added)

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

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<sup>15</sup> 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).

<sup>16</sup> 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, practical/ 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.

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