

Chapter 3

Intercultural Encounters: Staff Development in Transnational Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

As transnational higher education involves the international movement of curricula and personnel from one country to another, it may bring about myriad cross-cultural challenges. This non-empirical exploratory chapter examines the intercultural factors relating to staff development from three aspects. The first aspect is staff-student interaction, considering how the cultural backgrounds of both staff and students shape preferred pedagogical approaches, specifically in relation to feedback, as well as how motivation and performance affect classroom dynamics. Secondly, staff-staff interaction is examined by analysing the mismatch of expectations between employees

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and their respective TNHE institutions, highlighting intercultural nuances, awareness, and competence. Lastly, the chapter considers staff-third party interaction, investigating the extent to which TNHE staff engage with the broader professional community and its potential to positively impact intercultural staff development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) is a relatively new educational phenomenon and the trend of this particular form of tertiary education internationalisation is expanding exponentially, as during the period between 2014 and 2021 alone, U.K. offshore TNHE enrolments increased by 24.9%, with key markets being in the emerging economies of East Asia (29% increase) and the Middle East (16.7% increase) (Bennell, 2023). Despite the importance of this growing sector, there is currently a limited amount of research concerning key issues relating to this context, especially regarding the areas of staff development and intercultural factors. TNHE operates at the intersection of diverse cultural, institutional, and educational practices, necessitating a nuanced understanding of intercultural competence to achieve both institutional and individual success.

As such, this chapter conducts a literature review to analyse key TNHE studies, focusing on intercultural factors in staff development. This literature review follows Snyder's (2019) principles for conducting such analyses which pertain to design (justifying the review's purpose), conduct (selecting relevant materials), analysis (identifying key information), and writing (including all pertinent details). The 'design' targets crucial intercultural staff development areas for TNHE stakeholders, with 'conduct' involving selecting studies related to culture and personnel in TNHE contexts, 'analysis' informing best practices and guiding future research into these significant yet underexplored areas, and 'writing' charting the current research landscape to enhance understanding of these critical intercultural factors.

Three key areas of intercultural interaction impacting staff development will be explored: staff-student interaction, staff-staff interaction, and staff-third party interaction. In relation to staff-student interaction, the chapter examines how cultural differences may affect relationships, feedback, classroom dynamics, and pedagogical alignment. For staff-staff interaction, the study addresses challenges from mismatched expectations, evaluating institutional policies, intercultural training, and the role of cultural awareness and communication in ensuring a cohesive workplace. In staff-third party interaction, it highlights cultural sensitivity, strategic communication, and trust-building as essential for productive relationships and institutional success. The chapter concludes with recommendations for targeted training and policies to equip

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