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Transnational education in schools, universities, and beyond. Definitions and research areas

Abstract

The article is directed to theorizing *Transnational Education* (TNE). This entails definitions of what is meant by *transnational* and by *education*. It also focuses a variety of social realities which might be classified as TNE. The main aim of the article is to sharpen TNE as an analytical concept and at the same time broaden the horizon on the range of actors who are involved in TNE within different sectors of education epitomised as *schools, universities, and beyond*. It is posited that for research it is not only essential to have a clear view of what is considered as transnational, but also to take into account which sectors of education shall be addressed. This leads to questions of legitimacy and governance, because: who defines, controls, and regulates TNE? Here the theoretical crushing point is the relation of TNE to the sovereignty principle of national education policy. In the first part of the article TNE is defined and conceptualised, whereas in the second part the three TNE research areas announced in the title are characterised.

Keywords: transnational education, transnational higher education, privatization of education, education as a commodity, GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services)

Part I: What is transnational education (TNE)?

Different from everyday communication and political speech or trade talk in which terms and concepts are mostly not explicitly (or openly) reflected or at best only vaguely defined scientific research depends on clear definitions of the objects of research. This is why it needs to be explicated what is defined as *transnational* and what is meant by *education*.[1]

What is transnational?

Transnational is conceptualised as a specific variation of cross-border relations which are non-governmental, non-state or private in contrast to *international* in the sense of intergovernmental. This decision gives *international* two different meanings, one as an umbrella term for any relations across national borders (broad definition), and the other which puts stress on the 'inter' (between) two national entities in the sense of *inter-national* (with a hyphen) as a synonym for the intergovernmental (narrow definition). Why this stress on the *non-governmental, non-state or private* nature of relations? It epitomizes the fact that *trans*national

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[1] Part I of the following discussion summarises main aspects of the concept-building of the author (in German: Adick 2005, 2008a, 2012; in English: Adick 2008b, 2016a), but is not identical with any of these articles.

activities ultimately originate and are practiced and developed by individuals or associations venturing across national borders by creating social spaces which span *beyond national as well as inter-national (intergovernmental) spheres*. Admittedly in social reality such a distinction – basic as it seems – is not always easy to make since there is often a mix of actors encompassing e.g. state agencies, commercial enterprises, trade unions, privately acting individuals, civil society movements, international governmental organisations, and others. A simple mind game may help to solve the puzzle: Supposing a private international school would not attract enough students or be able to manage with the incoming tuition fees, would the education ministry of the host country or an international organisation like UNESCO finance its existence? No. In contrast, if it were a regular public school some national institution responsible for the education sector would react, e.g. send a school inspector to find what is wrong, or close the school and place the children in another public school. The difference is that in the first case the ultimate ownership and accountability is *private* (even if such a school is accredited by the state and receives public subsidies) whereas in the second case the school is run by the national education authorities. Considering the first case such a school is not only 'private' but at the same time also 'foreign' because it is operated by actors with liaisons across national boundaries'.

In social sciences the use of the terms *non-governmental* or *non-state* or *non-profit* (instead of *private*) is frequent, especially in respect to organisations. While these terms are often used quasi-synonymously and all seem to appeal to *third sector* or *civil society* actors, the terms remain blurred to a certain extent (cf. Adick, Hahm & Weiler, 2014): 'Non-governmental' alludes to voluntary, philanthropic associations but in principle might also include 'private' economic organisations. Commercial activities are 'private' (non-state) sector in any case, if for profit; but they may also lack a profit-orientation, while still being commercial in that they operate in a market under conditions of competition financed by (however small) fees which have to be paid by the 'clients'. In the case of TNE there exists a global market for 'education or pedagogical services' addressing children, parents, students, school administrators offering 'commodities' like private schools, tutoring, vocational or further education for instance - and possibly replacing the school as a common good (Altbach 2015).

What is education?

Most often 'education' is just used as an equivalent to formal education in schools and universities as distinct from broader meanings which stretch over different grades of non-formal or informal education unto including socialisation in the family and not least lifelong learning. The wider the definition of education the broader is the social reality which comes to the surface when researching transnational educational landscapes[2]. The long established and widely appreciated distinction between *formal, non-formal and informal education* (Evans 1981) may help to structure research on TNE, even though in the literature 'education' is at times mixed up with 'learning' (non-formal or informal learning/education). Important to note is that the criterion behind this distinction is *the grade of organisational formalisation*. *Formal education* is more or less equivalent to the notion of the state-controlled compulsory education systems as they have become universalised during the past two centuries as 'the'

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[2] Since this article focuses on theory-building and research the *normative implications or any recommendations* for possibly suitable curricula, contents, methods and aims of TNE will not be discussed here. In future research it would, however, be worthwhile to specify if and how different TNE programs incorporate concepts like cosmopolitan or international education, education for sustainable development or global citizenship education.

(one) global model of modern schooling (Adick 1995). Today, access to such formal education is declared a universal human right, an obligation for (young) citizens to participate and not least the obligation of the states to provide it for their citizens and to issue state-regulated curricula and certificates. *Non-formal education* largely means education which is offered and consumed in an organised way, but *outside* the formal education system which it may replace or supplement like adult or continuing education; it may also result in specific certificates sometimes also acknowledged by the state. *Informal education* stands for arrangements which might be 'educational' in some kind like youth groups, cultural expositions, learning on the job or leisure time activities. The more 'informal' the organisational set-up is the less stringent is the terminology. According to the author's view, *informal education* should better be called 'informal learning', because intentional education is often rather far-fledged. In recent times the most appealing and far-ranging concept seems to be *'lifelong learning'* (LLL) which tends to overshadow or even replace the term 'education' altogether. It has become widely propelled since the 1990s by the so-called "Big Five" in international education policy: UNESCO, World Bank, OECD, EU and ILO, from where it diffused to other international governmental and numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as has recently been shown by an impressive list of organisations which have adopted LLL (Zapp & Dahmen, 2017, pp. 504-506).

It has also become prominent to speak of *'educational spaces'*, like in historical education research in order to 'put the nation into perspective' (Kesper-Biermann 2016); in this view, educational spaces are seen as constituted "by relations, interactions and perceptions", "the significance of historical actors" may be emphasised, and actors who operate at different levels (local, regional, national, international) "can be understood as independent actors" (ibid., 93). In the concept favoured here *'educational spaces'* has been taken as a broader term in analogy to 'social or societal spaces' which, according to Pries (2008, pp. 10-12), comprise rather stable *social practices* (like work and interpersonal communication), *symbol systems* (complex signs for and in a context which give meaning to social practices), and *artefacts* (stemming from human action and work). Basically, then, also a transnational educational space may be characterised (and compared to other ones) by what participants are doing there (like practices in a school, a classroom or in the yard of a kindergarten), its symbols (like the motto of a school or a flag, medals, songs and rituals), and its artefacts (like textbooks, the architecture and furniture of its buildings, apparatus in laboratories, devices for instruction and play).

What is transnational education (TNE)?

TNE takes place in educational spaces organised on a private (non-state, non-governmental, profit or non-profit) basis across national borders in which people meat and act for the purpose of gaining or transmitting education. This condensed definition contains the most important criteria:
- The objective of the interaction must be 'education' (in whatever formal or non-formal or other format like sketched above).
- The (ultimate) ownership and accountability of the educational space is 'private' (non-state, non-governmental, for profit or non-profit) which does not preclude mixing with other actors like national or international (intergovernmental) agencies.
- The interaction must span pluri-locally across national borders (border crossing mobility and location of programs, people, educational institutions and artefacts).

In view of research it needs to be recalled that any classification (like formal, non-formal or informal education) entails methodological implications. For instance, in the case of formal education a lot of existing basic information and data-sets are available (e.g. provided by UNESCO or OECD) such as number and types of schools, teachers and enrolments. These 'big data' have become more complete, more professional and more accessible (most even open access) over the last decades and more cohesive for comparison, as might be illustrated by the fine-tuning of ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education)[3]. The data offered by the 'Big Five' mentioned above may be used for secondary analyses, but can also be the starting point e.g. to purposively sample which kind of actors (from an established categorization and number) one wants to interview. In contrast, a researcher first has to define what kind of 'informal education' or LLL s/he wants to evaluate before undertaking procedures like sampling and constructing suitable research tools. Since research on TNE necessarily includes data-gathering on private, non-governmental, non-state actors who operate across borders (like foundations, church organisations, humanitarian NGOs, or enterprises) there are far less cohesive and openly accessible collections of hard facts and data on which to build research questions and hypotheses.

Some important areas of education have to be pointed out here because there are quite some activities across borders taking place in them which makes them attractive for TNE research, also noting which of them are traced further in this article:

- One important sector is *higher education* which is classically represented by universities and students coming from high schools. But in times of LLL 'higher education' addresses more 'non-traditional' (adult) students and stands for an ever larger number of 'tertiary', 'post secondary' educational institutions and programs (cf. country examples in Schuetze & Slowey, 2000). Higher education is highly formalised, but it operates outside the (compulsory) school system (so it does not coincide with 'formal education'; if higher education became compulsory, i.e. a universal right and a state's obligation to provide it for every citizen, it would, of course be part of the 'formal education system' of that state.) There are a lot of cross-border activities and relations going on in realms of higher education which is why this sector has received a unique status of its own in the following.

- Another important sector which is not easy to place either into formal or non-formal education is *TVET (technical and vocational education and training)*. Depending on the national education systems it is sometimes (partly) included, sometimes (partly) excluded from the compulsory education system, which means that it would range either as formal or as non-formal education. Nowadays it even tends to overlap with 'higher education' as for instance in post-secondary/tertiary sector technical academies/polytechnics. There are private and border-crossing activities taking place which means it would be challenging and rewarding to write about 'transnational TVET', but for reasons of space this is not considered here.

- Another area which is not covered by the above-mentioned typology of formal, non-formal and informal education is the broad sector of *social work or social pedagogy*. While this sector entails some kind of 'education' (or 'pedagogical efforts') the meaning of it is more in the sense of socialisation, upbringing, counselling, care work,

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[3] ISCED has been developed by UNESCO in order to substantiate comparisons of education systems world-wide; it classifies education from pre-school to tertiary education into six levels and sub-levels and is adjusted from time to time in order to accommodate changes and developments.

welfare and rehabilitation rather than of teaching and instruction and the acquisition of knowledge and qualifications – which are the prevailing forms of 'education' in the above-named

classification. Taking into account the broad range of programs which are directed to LLL, overlapping with social work might also be observed e.g. in areas such as health literacy. In this article some transnational educational spaces will be mentioned, which display cross-sections with TNE in order to call for future research.

- A last specification has to be made when talking about TNE which is the distinction between *educational practices* on the one hand and *educational policy-making* on the other hand. Any (political) discourse about education, collecting evidence to support decision-making, writing recommendations, echoing academic (self-)interests of teachers and educators, issuing national laws and regulations and international agreements will be considered as 'educational policies'. Such policies emerge at the national level, but are often also instilled and influenced by international organisations as mentioned above, but they might also be (partly) the result of *transnational private (non-governmental, non-state) influence and lobbying* which makes them attractive for TNE research. Large transnational NGOs like Oxfam which coordinates the Global Campaign for Education or the SOROS Foundation which influences academic institution-building and research policies have become global players in the evolving global governance architecture (Adick, 2012, pp. 88-90) – besides governments and international organisations. In the following, transnational educational policy-making will be highlighted from time to time, but will not be at the core of the argumentation.

Part II: Research Areas in the Realm of 'Transnational Education'

Research on TNE does not stand isolated but displays cross-sections with other fields of study especially in areas concerned with privatization, commercialization, commodification, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the governance of education and with multiple discussions on educational (policy) transfer across borders.

Due to the basically 'private' character of TNE, there is quite some overlap with research on *privatization, commodification, and commercialization of education* in the era of neo-liberalism (Lohmann, 2001). On a global market, educational transfers across borders fall under if signed binding regulations (GATS) of a multilateral organisation (WTO) (Knight, 2002; Robertson, Bonal & Dale, 2002). The financial challenges in modern welfare states, but also in poor 'developing countries', to finance the allegedly ever more costly free education and social services have lead to concepts of New Public Management (lean administration, outsourcing to private providers) and Public Private Partnerships (joint ventures with enterprises). While such topics might be discussed on a purely national basis recent publications offer comparative views of different countries, like Chile, UK, USA, Netherlands, Spain and others (Verger, Fontdevila & Zancajo, 2016). A lot of phenomena and actors might be 'private' and commercial, and developments might even be similar in several countries, but still not necessarily fall under TNE, because they do not span across national borders. However, as the 2016 World Yearbook of Education suggests, there are indications that cross-national activities of certain educational foundations and enterprises have gained impact and might lead to a 'global education industry' (Vergier, Lubienski & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Similarly, the world might be on the way to a 'global education policy' (Mundy, Green, Lingard &

Verger, 2016). Country studies are not per se relevant for TNE research, but only, if *crossing national borders* is implied, i.e. *foreign* providers are acting on host territories.

Also important to note is the cross-section between TNE and the field of *international educational (policy) transfer* – one of the core themes of comparative education since its beginnings mostly known as 'borrowing & lending' between nations. In this case the overlap derives from the cross-border type of relations which are addressed in both views. But while borrowing & lending resp. educational transfer also addresses ways of *international transfer* (in the sense of intergovernmental) like adopting models from successful PISA states in countries with lower results, TNE research is directed to variations of *transnational (private, non-state) transfer* like branch campuses overseas, private tutoring by multinational firms, self-organised language-of-origin and cultural education classes run by transmigrant communities, school programs or literacy courses operated by transnational NGOs. As has been said before, TNE does not preclude mixed arrangements between private and state agencies, so that it may remain debatable if e.g. GONGOs (government organised NGOs) should rather be considered as 'national' (or 'inter-national' in the sense of inter-governmental) or as 'transnational'. So classifications remain tricky as may be demonstrated for organisations like cultural institutes (Goethe or Confucius institutes) operating in the area of foreign cultural and educational policy (Adick, 2016b). But how much government-financed or sponsored by state agencies ever an organisation is, if its judicial set-up and accountability are (allegedly) 'private' it can be considered for TNE research.

As announced in the title of this article TNE will now be considered in 'schools, universities and beyond' by trying to sketch out the main characteristics of each field of research.

The school is still a predominantly national affair.

Since compulsory education is at least proclaimed practically everywhere in the world, each and every state has to provide schools, either by offering all public schooling (only) or by admitting private schools alongside, but controlling them in some way (e.g. prescribing a syllabus, control by school inspectors, reporting) so that they might fulfil the national compulsory education requirements. As has already been underscored, this criterion (the national sovereignty over compulsory education principle) explains why there is rather little TNE offered by *foreign* non-governmental, non-state or private actors on the terrain of a host national school system (Adick, 2005, pp. 256-257). Private schooling has to be (co-)financed by somebody (the parents, a company, a foreign state, an international foundation), and it is not the host country's revenue which is responsible for the school budget (if not just for subsidizing which may always be cut down or stopped). This also leads to the fact that TNE in the school sector is not so prevalent. Furthermore, even if numbers of private schools are growing this is not equivalent to notions of TNE taking over national education systems. Keeping this general diagnosis in mind, I want to suggest three main TNE variants in the schools sector by applying *the 'relation to the national curriculum and certificates'* as the relevant criterion of distinction.

A first type refers to 'international schools' which are offering *fully international curricula and certificates* like the IB (International Baccalaureate) as has been analysed by Hornberg (2010, pp. 147-220). Even though the certificate and education in these schools are called

'international' (Hayden & Thompson, 2001), the IB and the curricula leading to it may be classified as a truly transnational high school curriculum and certificate, because it is

conceptualised, issued and marketed against payment by a non-national organisation – the IBO (International Baccalaureate Office). Also, it is not the result of intergovernmental agreements (which would classify it as 'inter-national'). Since the curriculum and certificate do not represent any specific national education system, it is uniquely transnational.

A second type are schools with *double curricula and certificates*, i.e. one foreign plus the host country's national programs and certificates, as it is typical for *'foreign schools abroad'* which a lot of countries like UK, USA, France, Spain, Germany and others offer abroad as part of their foreign cultural policy (Adick, 2016b). Such schools need to be private in nature while they operate on a foreign state's territory; they are financed by school fees which vary according to the character and philosophy of the school but also to the amount of possible funding from third parties like multinational corporations which want to cater for the families of their expatriates. But often, also local families of the host country or third nationals send their children to such 'English', 'French' or 'German' schools established abroad. Such schools for expatriates abroad (at times also including host countries' clientele) have been researched to a certain extent, but mostly on a national basis (and not as TNE institutions), which means that comparisons between different types of foreign schools abroad and how they arrange with the national educational sovereignty of the host countries are still lacking.

A third type of TNE in the school sector is constituted by *foreign (non-state, non-governmental) actors* (churches, foundations, NGOs) who operate the *national curricula and certificates* of a given country *in place of the host state's authorities,* with or without the intention to make profit, a scenario which often occurs in so-called developing countries of the world. A non-profit example would be a Church Organisation in Europe which runs schools in some African countries via their local partner churches. Such Christian schools depend on foreign 'aid' from Europe, they are private institutions on the host territory, accredited to fulfil the national requirements of primary or secondary education and might collect school fees, but they are not meant to make profit. Even if often allegedly associated with elite education, there are numerous examples that such schools address the normal school-age clientele (Scheunpflug & Wenz, 2015).

In recent years some 'developing' countries have experienced a rapid growth of another category of schools run by *transnational for-profit companies* (headquartered in 'Western countries') and most often as *chains of 'low-fee private schools'* (Srivastava, 2016; Verger et l., 2016, pp. 89-103). Although they also operate 'in place of the host state's authorities' (like the philanthropic ones depicted above) such schools should be conceived as a distinct new type. Even though they are fully commercial, they might even have been recruited by the host state's authorities because the national school system cannot meet the local needs, is in crisis or national educational policy is default. The example of "Bridge International Academies" has become prominent in scientific and policy debates; it is a corporation which offers for-profit primary education at allegedly 'affordable' tuition rates in various African countries like Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria, and also elsewhere. Field research on Bridge International Academies in Uganda revealed that inscription and tuition fees and compulsory school uniform amounted to USD 99 for grades primary 1, 2, 3 and to USD 108 for primary 4 and 5 per year (including lunch it would amount to USD 143 and USD 152 respectively). This study was conducted under the auspices of *Education International* (EI) which can be considered as a *transnational global player in education policy-discourse* since it is an umbrella

organisation which unites more than 400 teachers' trade unions representing educational personnel from pre-school through university of most of the countries

of the world. Contrary to what is suggested by 'low-fee' schools, the authors of this study demonstrated that these parental costs may be considered as hardly affordable for the poorest population who actually should benefit from these schools (Riep & Machacek, 2016, p. 23-24). The teaching of Bridge International Academies (and other low-fee private school chains) follows standardized concepts which allow the employment of low qualified teachers. The enterprise is co-sponsored by other global players in TNE like the *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.* If such a model of compulsory education – replacing state authority and obligation to guarantee schooling and being operated for profit by a foreign enterprise – became popular and widely implemented (not just to cover a situation of crisis) all histories and theories of modern 'national education systems' would have to be rewritten.

But before transnational corporations completely take over national education systems the national sovereignty principle sets a certain barrier by the fact that any foreign or international providers of schooling have to be accredited by the host country's education authorities, provided that the host state allows any private schooling and/or any schooling for profit at all and provided that the host country's administration and legal institutions act effectively. If allowed the *foreign* providers may get accredited on the same basis as *local* private schools and receive a status attesting that they comply with the requirements similar to state-schools. If not they may be restricted to cater only for certain clienteles like children of foreign residents. All these features signal a considerable dependency on a country's policy which means that a state is not necessarily the prey of a transnational education corporation, but instead, it can ban or even expel a once-accredited foreign education provider. One prominent example is the Fethullah Gülen inspired schools which had spread to countries far away from Turkey in the last decades and were therefore classified as a 'global player' in the international Islamic schools sector (cf. Adick, 2012, p. 90). But the prosecution of the founder and his adepts by the official Turkish policy after the coup of 2016 has lead to countries outside Turkey experiencing official Turkish demands to close down such schools in their country, even though this would mean a direct foreign interference into national education sovereignty.[4]

Transnational higher education is booming

TNE in higher education has been identified as one of the early cornerstones of the nascent debate on TNE (the other two being *transnational convergences in education* and *education in transmigrant communities,* cf. Adick, 2005). In fact, the term and the acronym TNE derived from the higher education sector as stated in a 2001 report of the Confederation of the European Rectors in which a preliminary definition of UNESCO and the Council of Europe was given declaring TNE as "All types of higher education study programme, or set of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the educational system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national system" (Adam, 2001, p. 13). Later in this text TNE is associated with terms like 'non-official', 'offshore', 'borderless', 'cross-border' or 'consortial' (ibid., 40) – highlighting that such activities take

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[4] According to some press and internet sources there is such pressure on governments in European countries like Germany, but also in Africa such as Cameroon and Senegal, and possibly in others as well. Verification of this and more information and research would be needed.

place beyond or outside governmental activities, even though they might be in collaboration with or regulated by national rules or international organisations. Globalisation has been seen as the dilution of former cooperative reciprocal ideals of internationalisation (Lanzendorf & Teichler, 2003) and a moving force behind the emergence of for-profit higher education (Morey, 2004).

For decades and in mainstream circles till now 'TNE' stands (only) for transnational endeavours in *higher education* – with no mention of other sectors of education which might also practice TNE, for instance in the overviews of O'Mahony (2014) and Bannier (2016) and in numerous articles in the corner-stone 'International Higher Education' (IHE), founded by Philip G. Altbach in 1995 and published by the Boston College Centre for International Higher Education as an open access e-journal which means high visibility in TNE discussions. Even when explicitly writing about "transnational higher education" authors still stick to the acronym "TNE" until to date (e.g. Waters & Leung, 2017). This is why the acronym TNHE which is favoured here, is not (yet) widespread.

Also in the German policy discourse TNE means higher education only, as in publications and leaflets issued by the DAAD, i.e. the German Academic Exchange Service, devoted to *Transnationale Bildung* (and not to *Transnationale Hochschulbildung*) during the last decade. Germany has become a 'transnational player' by supporting entrepreneurial export activities of its higher education institutions since the year 2000 by various programs (Lanzendorf 2006). An analysis of several of such pro-active incentives of the German government in this competitive sector shows an emphasis not least on the emerging BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and an impressive scale such exports have already achieved in comparison to other German export sectors; a lot of money is involved, much more than in the schools sector (Adick, 2014). Over the years, TNHE has made a steep career on the German higher education policy agenda with in-house studies on topics like the impact of TNHE on host countries, problems of data-collection, and a code of good practice having been published which can only be hinted at in sum here without going into details.

Most challenging for academic research is, however, the very recent and unique cooperation between the DAAD in Germany and the British Council in the United Kingdom in "Going Global 2017": While German and UK providers of TNHE are competing on the global market of higher education exports these two (government-organised) agencies have joined their efforts to exchange information and to standardise data-gathering. Different from other debates on TNE, one of the main concerns of TNHE right from the beginnings had been *how to define and typify variations of transnational educational provisions* (as in Adam, 2001, noted above). The DAAD and British Council alliance now agreed on a new term and classification: IPPM meaning *International Programme and Provider Mobility*, subdivided into two main axis 'independent' and 'collaborative', whereby 'independent' is logically equivalent to what is here defined as 'transnational' (branch campus, franchise, cross-border distance education, the accountability lying with the export stakeholder) and 'collaborative' equals what has been called 'international' in my concept because it means cross-national partnership programs (double degrees, joint university founding, distance education programs with a partner university abroad). The last outcome of this process is co-authored by the reputed higher education researchers Knight and McNamara (2017).

Following the theory-oriented view of this article the recent British Council-DAAD alliance may be interpreted as a proof that national governments do not only want to support the export of 'their' higher education for the sake of 'nation-branding' but also get an overview

and control over 'their' (private, non-state) transnational actors and the quality of their 'commodities'. A first 'Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education' had been proclaimed by intergovernmental organisations UNESCO (CEPES) and the Council of Europe as early as 2001 as a reaction to problems of regulation, quality control and accreditation which accompanied the expansion of TNHE right from the start (Adick, 2005, pp. 255-256). This was followed by a joint declaration of 'Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education' of UNESCO and OECD (2005). To conclude, even though higher education does not fall into the compulsory education sector, the national sovereignty principle watches also over the 'private' actors in TNHE – not least for the purposes of governance and control.

A glimpse on some scholarly literature surveys underscores the important nexus and cross-section of TNHE research with adjacent research areas like neo-liberal commodification, international transfer etc. which was recalled above, but also conveys the message that a lot of literature might be rather descriptive and even affirmative in nature, lacking critical discussion of sensitive topics like overt marketization and competition of higher education.

Commissioned by the Higher Education Academy of UK a survey on the provision, value and practices of TNHE by UK stakeholders (O'Mahony, 2014) included a content-analysis of existing TNE literature between 2000 and 2013 (ibid., pp. 11-18): Among 83 publications which were chosen for further analysis, the largest number of authors (N=29) came from Australia – the largest exporter of TNHE – while there was only one from Germany – a 'late-comer' in this realm. Concerning the topics that were most frequently discussed it was concluded "that the dominant themes in the TNE literature are globalisation, policy, quality assurance and trade. Themes related to learning and teaching are less well covered" (ibid., p. 13). Visualising the relationship between the above-named themes as a network (ibid., fig. 5, p. 14) the topics *globalisation, policy and trade* were found as being strongly inter-related.

Another systematic analysis of nearly two thousand publications on *offshore, transnational, borderless, and cross-border higher education* published between 1990 and 2014 (Kosmützky & Putty 2016), found that all these four terms are used in the literature (sometimes even simultaneously) and all of them "highlight the distinction between the traditional international mobility of students and academics across borders and new forms of global flows of programs, providers and institutions, and new rationales for mobility" (ibid., p. 9). Over the years the terms *offshore* and *transnational* higher education were used more frequently than *cross-border* and *borderless* higher education. Numbers of publications have rapidly increased after the turn of the century and consist mainly of journal articles, many of them concentrated in 20 journals (ibid. fig 1 & 2, pp. 11-12). The analysis of keywords (cf. ibid., tab. 2, p. 14) revealed four main clusters in percentage of appearance in the publications: "educational policies and trends" (28%); "cultural differences" (25%); "awareness and identity" (23%); and "program design" (19%). But to the astonishment of the authors keywords like branding and marketing, or brain drain/brain gain, hardy appeared in the literature (ibid, p. 13). At the end of their article Kosmützky & Putty (both scholars at the INCHER Kassel) assembled a 'reading list' (according to citation indices) which researchers might find helpful on: overview and trends; quality assurance and regulation; teaching, learning and student experience; policy and governance; management and institutional strategies; student choice and student mobility (ibid. Appendix, pp. 24-29).

Transnational education beyond schools and universities has remained a white spot in the educational landscape

This research area is very diverse and under-researched – not least because of the difficulties to define 'education' in programs and activities taking place outside schools and universities as has been noted above. The following examples refer to non-formal education across borders in which teaching and learning can be recognized as distinct from e.g. purely social welfare or rehabilitation or care work. They are by far not exhaustive but shall unfold future research perspectives for what might be labelled as *'non-formal or informal TNE'*.

The formal education sector, i.e. schools, is overshadowed by what has been termed a *'shadow education industry'*, which means private supplementary tutoring outside the mainstream education facilities, mostly privately paid by tuition fees and offered by individuals but also by companies. The growing literature on this topic (cf. the overview in Bray,. 2017) needs to be screened in search of *transnational* providers, who are there, but who do not necessarily make up the majority of shadow education provided on a national terrain. Consumers may not even be aware that the tutoring service of their children is a franchise enterprise of an international company when it has a local name like the *Schülerhilfe* in Germany as a franchise partner of the *Sylvan Learning Center*, which is part of *Educate Inc.* – an international educational enterprise founded 1979 in the USA and listed in NASDAQ. There are other transnational corporations operating for profit in this field, among them a 'global player' like *Kumon Institute of Education Co. Ltd.*, which was founded in 1958 in Japan and now operates in many countries, also including Germany (Adick, 2012, pp. 89-90). These examples demonstrate that shadow education by foreign providers can be considered for TNE research. Concerning the criterion applied to the schools sector above ('relation to the national curriculum and certificates'), *transnational shadow education* can be labelled *to mimic national curricula and certificates*.

Non-formal TNE outside schools and universities is also offered by various *'transnational language schools'* which operate independently from a national school system in a range of countries like the *Bénédict Schools* and *Inlingua* schools. Both enterprises originated in Switzerland, but in the meantime they have dependences in other countries. It should be noted that they teach according to their own internally developed curricula, standards and rules. Participants have to pay fees for the courses and examinations; and (virtual or face-to-face) cross-border and intercultural activities are included.

Another area is '*educational institutions created and run by migrant communities*' who establish educational spaces that span across several national boundaries. Aiming to transmit the language, religion and culture of their places of origin to their children such migrant associations tend to organise language courses, religious teaching and cultural activities. This is done in different ways according to the circumstances of the host countries as examples of Muslim migrant communities in different European countries show (Daun & Arjman, 2005). Mostly, such education remains informal or non-formal in nature, e.g. taking place in the afternoon, at weekends or holidays. Such formats of schooling may develop from informal to become quite formalised in the course of time, as has been researched for schools organised by the Tamil Diaspora in various countries by Somalingam (2017, pp. 143-181): A trans-national umbrella organisation, the *Tamil Education Development Council,* coordinates the activities of several organisations which operate at the national levels of the host countries as Tamil voluntary organisations. For example in Germany there are 136 schools

comprising about 940 teachers and 6,500 pupils, who are taught mostly at weekends grouped together in different grades by using standardised instructional media like textbooks especially written for the children of the Tamil Diaspora. These Tamil schools are, however, not part of the compulsory education system in Germany; and the Tamil language competences which students acquire are not even registered in their official school records. But developments might continue into the direction of a fully developed private school system accredited by the host state as part of its compulsory education system. TNE research should therefore highlight if and under which circumstances such schools of migrant communities attain the status of the 'classical' type of foreign schools abroad (like German or French schools abroad) depicted above.

Voluntary social services stretching across national boundaries also encompass 'informal learning' or 'non-formal education' such as improving one's foreign language, intercultural communication or management skills. The European Voluntary Service sponsors 18 to 30 year old young people to do voluntary work in a program in a foreign country extending between 2 and 12 months. It is also an example for the mix of actors, because the majority of the sending as well as the hosting organisations are voluntary associations, church organisations, NGOs, charitable foundations, non-profit organisations – whereas the funding of the volunteers and the accrediting of these organisations lies in the hands of a program agency under the European Commission which is on organ of the – supranational – European Union. Coming to the question of TNE, recent research has pinpointed to the challenges of how to evaluate what has been learnt in the projects to which the young people are dispatched abroad (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017). This is important to note because the learning outcomes of this voluntary service are categorized in some pre-defined key competences and are to be formally documented in a 'Youthpass' as a kind of non-formal certificate. Certification is getting prevalent in all concepts of LLL, because if one postulates the relevance of non-school based learning it is eminent to somehow prove this by classifying results in such a way that they can be valued as a supplement to or as a replacement for the lack of school certificates. This echoes the motifs and career of the 'European Qualifications Framework' which tries to capture non-formal and informal learning on the job and in daily life as qualifications at the margins of higher education and vocational training in view to enhance cross-border mobility in the European higher education space and on the job market (Dunkel, 2006). Seen through the theoretical lens of this article one can posit that *non-formal or informal TNE* 'beyond schools and universities' tends to imitate formal education which, then, can be diagnosed to be the model which sets the norms and values.

Concluding remarks

The article has embarked on deriving at valid and operational definitions of what 'transnational' and 'education' could mean for research, in relation to other adjacent or seemingly similar concepts such as international education. It has also tried to sketch the broad variety of educational set-ups in which transnational actors or developments occur. Whereas TNE in higher education is rather well documented and researched, this is less so for the compulsory education sector. The reason for this is seen in the fact that the state sovereignty principle is at the very centre of the state-regulated compulsory education system, whereas this is less so in post-secondary, college, or tertiary education where private stakeholders and financing are more widespread and in some countries might even tend to become the

majority. In contrast, transnational education beyond those two main areas of formal education is hardly researched at all as yet. This might be due to the large variety of partly formalised, non-formal or informal pedagogical arrangements which are practised such as lifelong learning, vocational training, further education, family care or youth and social work – labels which denote very different realities and are much more diffuse than the well-established connotation of 'education' as an equation for learning in schools and universities. It depends very much on the political system of a country (e.g. welfare state or neo-liberal market economy) to what extent there is more or less private initiative in these spheres outside schools and universities, if, for instance, a national youth scheme exists which offers, finances and controls social work and outside school educational activities for children and youths, or if such things are left to private initiative and non-governmental philanthropic organisations which might also come from overseas and would then fall into the TNE category. Overall, then, the most salient challenge for research is if and what kind of 'education' is considered to be a public good or a private affair. Therefore, it has been suggested in this article, to place TNE research into the broader discussions on privatization and commercialization of education as well as on the (global, regional, and national) governance of education and on educational (policy) transfer across national borders.

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