

## Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

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Pedagogic Democracy versus Pedagogic Supremacy: Migrant Academics' Perspectives

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**Research Domain:** International Perspectives and context (IPC)

**Abstract:** This paper investigates the underexplored area of *othering* of migrant academics within their teaching context. Nine personal narratives of migrant academics' teaching were analysed qualitatively for indications of pedagogical othering. Migrant academics indicated the need to align their own pedagogic values and practices with that of their host institutions they work in as they felt their own values and practices were considered less desirable. We argue, from a Gramsci's hegemonic perspective that the pedagogic adaptation by migrant academics aimed at improving student learning is not problematic in itself, but more problematic is the inequality of opportunity for migrant academics to contribute to pedagogical decisions which can meaningfully influence the departmental pedagogic culture. Lack of pedagogic democracy where the 'home' academic environment has a monopoly of knowledge and a hegemonic position regarding learning and teaching can compromise the student-learning experience by limiting articulation of alternative pedagogical perspectives by migrant international academics.

**Paper:**

### Introduction

Internationalisation policies of higher education institutions (HEIs) have driven an increase in international migration among academics. Often these migrant academics have teaching as an integral part of their academic responsibilities. Several migrant academics have reported experiencing feelings of being different and out of place in their academic teaching roles, often referred to as othering in sociological literature (Hosein et al. 2018; Brooks, 2016). Whilst there is growing body of literature around the othering experienced by migrants when they move into new cultural contexts, there appears to be limited research on the othering experiences of migrant academics particularly in the context of their professional practice of teaching. When it does, the literature tends to focus on the language and communication aspects (see for example Collins, 2008). In this presentation, we

develop this particular thread of the discussion by elucidating the pedagogical othering trends in several migrant academics international teaching journeys which we argue below, underscores the need to reinforce and maintain a pedagogically democratic culture within university departments.

## Methodology

To explore the nature of pedagogic othering, we conducted a documentary analysis of nine published autoethnographic accounts by migrant academics on their teaching journeys (see Hosein et al, 2018). The nine migrant academics were early to mid-career academics who had moved to their new country within the past ten years and were all connected to a UK teaching context. A qualitative textual analysis approach was used to analyse the nine published autoethnographic accounts.

## Key findings and Analysis

We followed a thematic analytical approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) using the lens of Gramsci's cultural hegemony theory which suggests that an individual may feel that their pedagogical values are not in alignment with, or are suppressed by a dominant 'pedagogical group' within their educational context. We found that pedagogical othering was centred around three main themes: pedagogical approach, pedagogical expectations of behaviour and values, and pedagogical policies and procedures.

### Pedagogical Approach

Migrant academics because of difference in their own pedagogical approach and that of their host institution felt pedagogically othered and consequently felt the need to adapt or socialise to their institution's pedagogical approach. Most of the migrant academics of non-UK origin previously had limited exposure to student-centred teaching approaches and found themselves feeling at a disadvantage within the UK Higher Education systems. Further, we observed curiously that the two Western migrant academics were less likely to conform to the pedagogical approaches in their new environments. It is possible that Western academics had faith in their pedagogical approaches because they both came from systems where they were immersed in dominant pedagogical ideologies that endorsed the notion of the Western supremacy of their education. In contrast, those from non-western cultures expressed self-doubt in their pedagogical capabilities and questioned the appropriateness of their pedagogical belief and values rather than that of their host institutions.

### Pedagogical Expectations of Behaviour and Values

Migrant academics experienced a disconnect between their pedagogical expectations of the behaviours and values in their interactions with their students within their home and host countries/institutions. For example, Chloe Shu-Hua Yeh (from Taiwan) (2018) expressed differences in respect she received and gave to her teachers in her Taiwanese culture to that in the British HE institutions. Similarly, Erik (Blair) also experienced pedagogical othering because of the increased power distance between students and teachers in his context of Trinidad and Tobago:

*[...] when I asked students to call me 'Erik', the best I could get was 'Dr Erik'. I had felt that using first names would create an interactive atmosphere but, on reflection, I realized that I was actually making my students feel uncomfortable and creating a barrier to communication (Erik Blair 2018: 18).*

Thus, it appeared the pervading dominant pedagogical ideology that determines the nature of student-tutor relationship is often embedded into the societal cultures (Hofstede, 2011) and influenced the pedagogical discomfort and disconnect experienced by the migrant academics.

## Pedagogical Policies and Procedures

Migrant academics felt pedagogically othered by having to grapple with an established culture of the pedagogical policies and procedure within their HEI environment that was in opposition to their pedagogical values and beliefs. The level of metrics and monitoring required in the UK HEI environments were interfering on how migrant academics valued their students. Of course, the idea about metrics, monitoring and tension between research and teaching were not issues that affected migrant academics solely. Native academics mainly from Western countries, have also lamented about how their pedagogical values and beliefs are compromised by the fixation on metrics, monitoring of students and the overemphasis on research as opposed to teaching (Katz, 2015; Tomlinson, 2013).

## Concluding thoughts

Some of the migrant academics indicated that they felt they had to change pedagogical ideologies to fit with the dominant pedagogical ideology of their HEI environment and through this process made them feel that their previous pedagogical ideologies were inferior. We, therefore, theorise that the migrant academics were experiencing an HEI environment of pedagogical supremacy. In these pedagogical supremacy environments, the international transferable pedagogical knowledge of the migrant academics are lost. We contend that pedagogical democracy could be achieved by enabling a plurality of pedagogical ideas to be discussed and given a fair hearing in both the informal and decision-making agora's of universities (e.g. faculty learning and teaching related meetings), and also the higher education system more broadly (e.g. at Advance HE (UK) workshops/ conferences). In this case, the question is not about successfully integrating "subordinate classes" into the "value system" (Heywood, 2013, p. 175), but rather integrating the pedagogical philosophies of migrant academics into the pedagogical cultural networks of their institutions. Therefore this 'open' pedagogical cultural network could be posited as subscribing to pedagogical democracy. HEI environments should be striving towards an environment of pedagogical democracy where appropriate aspects of these transferable pedagogical knowledge could be incorporating to create and evolve new pedagogical knowledge.

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