

“ADULT LEARNING & COMMUNITIES IN A WORLD ON THE MOVE: BETWEEN NATIONAL TENSIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES”

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Learning in the age of transnational migration: Everyday pedagogies and moments of cultural de-stabilization

National governments across Europe, Australia, US and Canada have responded to the challenges of migration by not only trying to tighten their national borders to restrict the access of some groups of migrants, but also by mandating the types of education deemed appropriate and necessary to support cohesive and stable societies. These educational initiatives are almost invariably targeted at migrants, rather than the longer term settled population, and usually stipulate the language and citizenship requirements which must be achieved to enable naturalisation or permanent settlement. This paper will suggest that lifelong learning is being co-opted to support and manage the immigration policies of nation states. The education mandated is based on fundamental, but largely unspoken, assumptions about the nature of the individual, the social world in which we live, and processes of learning. Although ontological assumptions and theories of learning may not be explicit in policies, they can be discerned from the nature of state sanctioned provision and the expectations on learners. These assumptions will be outlined in relation to state mandated education for migrants and will be juxtaposed to the learning that migrants and longer term settled communities are undergoing in the process of living together. The disembodied and dis-embedded conceptualisations of learning enshrined in policy stand in contrast to the everyday pedagogy and learning that accompanies migration.

Through an exploration of transnationalism and the concept of transnational spaces an alternative framing is offered which sees communities and nations as spaces of connection (Massey 1994; 2005), which exist in constant flux and interconnected liveliness. Moving away from a sense of pure and bounded spaces fosters acknowledgement of the multi-layered histories of migration and the ongoing re-inscription of identities at individual, cultural, national and global levels. It also questions the assumption underpinning language and citizenship requirements that cohesive communities based on stability and common values are ever attainable (or indeed ever existed). Finally, transnational migration is posed as a mundane and inevitable part of life, one which gives rise to an everyday pedagogy of spontaneous, embodied and unpredictable learning. The alternative framing of migration and learning proposed suggests that the role of the educator is to open spaces which enable 'cultural de-stabilisation', and some broad pointers to how this process might be understood and shaped are offered.