

TRANSDISCIPLINARITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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Transversity: Transdisciplinary Approaches in Higher Education by Sue L.T. McGregor and Russ Volckmann, Integral Publishers, 2011, 140 pp.

A new book by Sue L.T. McGregor and Russ Volckmann, *Transversity*, examines transdisciplinary approaches and issues in higher education. The authors introduce the reader to transdisciplinarity and then apply the concept to higher education.

Chapter 1 introduces and defines transdisciplinarity. The author's provide a variety of definitions from experts in the field, presenting useful illustrations to compare the different approaches. Once the authors have satisfactorily defined transdisciplinarity they then explore how the concept can be applied to academia. They identify four questions that they seek to answer: how transdisciplinary work can be done, as well as the barriers, strategies, and leadership necessary to do transdisciplinary work at the university level. Due to the specialization required by many universities to obtain promotion and tenure, the intellectual creativity that is necessary between and among disciplines is lost. McGregor and Volckmann present a brief description of what a transdisciplinary university will look like before presenting the example of Arizona State University in Chapter 2. This chapter explains, in detail, the emphasis of transdisciplinarity at Arizona State University to reach their goals of research and innovation as well as the importance of developing partnerships to breakdown traditional barriers. This chapter is useful for those seeking to take a similar approach to education.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 examine how several European, Latin American, and Australian universities have undertaken transdisciplinarity. These universities, having long used such an approach for both research and education, provide for examples of integrating the curriculum so that students use all aspects of their education, humanities and the sciences, in their social contexts. The

author's conducted a series of in-depth interviews and workshops to gather information on the best approaches to academic transdisciplinarity.

While informative, the highlight of the book is the final two chapters, 6 and 7. Chapter 6 is largely devoted to exploring the work of Basarab Nicolescu who many consider to be the father of the modern-day transdisciplinary movement. Additionally, the authors interview Nicolescu, who outlines his three pillars of transdisciplinarity: epistemology, the logic of the included middle, and ontology. Unfortunately, the authors do not expound upon Nicolescu's ideas, taking what could have been an extremely fruitful chapter and devoting little space to his concepts. Chapter 7 synthesizes the first six chapters and uses that information to outline what is needed to implement transdisciplinary education and research in a university environment. McGregor and Volckmann outline what is needed at each level of academia, from the students to the administration, to develop a transdisciplinary university.

The book by McGregor and Volckmann does have some drawbacks, such as using wikipedia to obtain information on European universities. The main fault of the book is writing too much about the specifics of the approaches used at Arizona State University and the other universities covered in the first five chapters. The authors could have covered this material more briefly, as Chapter 7 does an excellent job of reviewing these methods and how they can be applied and instead use that space to expand upon the Nicolescu's approach and theories, as well as their interview with him in Chapter 6. While these changes would arguably improve the book, overall, the book provides some much needed input on transdisciplinary approaches and how they can be implemented in higher education.