

Creating effective learning communities in TNE

Dr Alexander Heinz (King's College London), Hannah Bond (King's College London)



SUMMER PROGRAMMES

KING'S
College
LONDON

Building community – Why?

Mental Health Trends in Young People

[US Figures]

- International research estimates that 75% of mental health problems emerge before the age of 25
- Percent of college students who report experiencing overwhelming anxiety within one year
 - 2008: less than 40%
 - 2017: more than 55%

A scenic landscape photograph featuring a mountain peak in the background under a bright sun with rays. In the foreground, there are clusters of white and red flowers. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

What is well-being?

“**Well-being** is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge.”

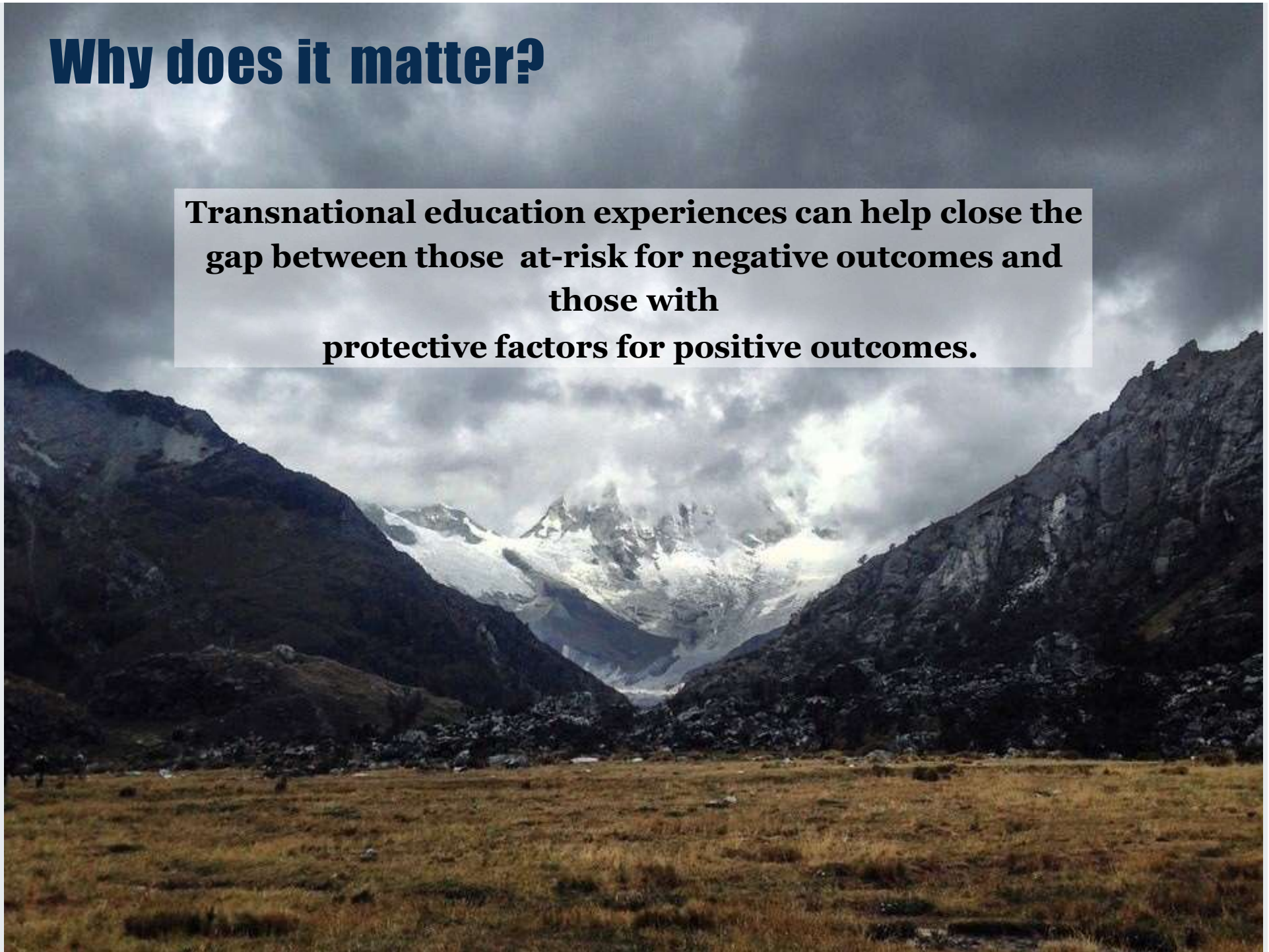
Influencers on well-being

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Why does it matter?

Transnational education experiences can help close the gap between those at-risk for negative outcomes and those with protective factors for positive outcomes.





Building community: face to face

Principles of TNE short term programme teaching:

Seeing a fuller human being = teaching as a fuller human being

- A more holistic approach to education
 - Valuing place and time
 - Eye-to-eye relationship between representatives of both (or more) cultures
 - Using each other as a resource to grow
- > Individuality within the group

How can these be achieved via community?

Examples

- Discover the international as a dimension for our future
- Personal agency: Overcoming hurdles in life
- Deconstruct preconceptions, notions of mentality, self and other
- Understand equality and inclusion in another culture

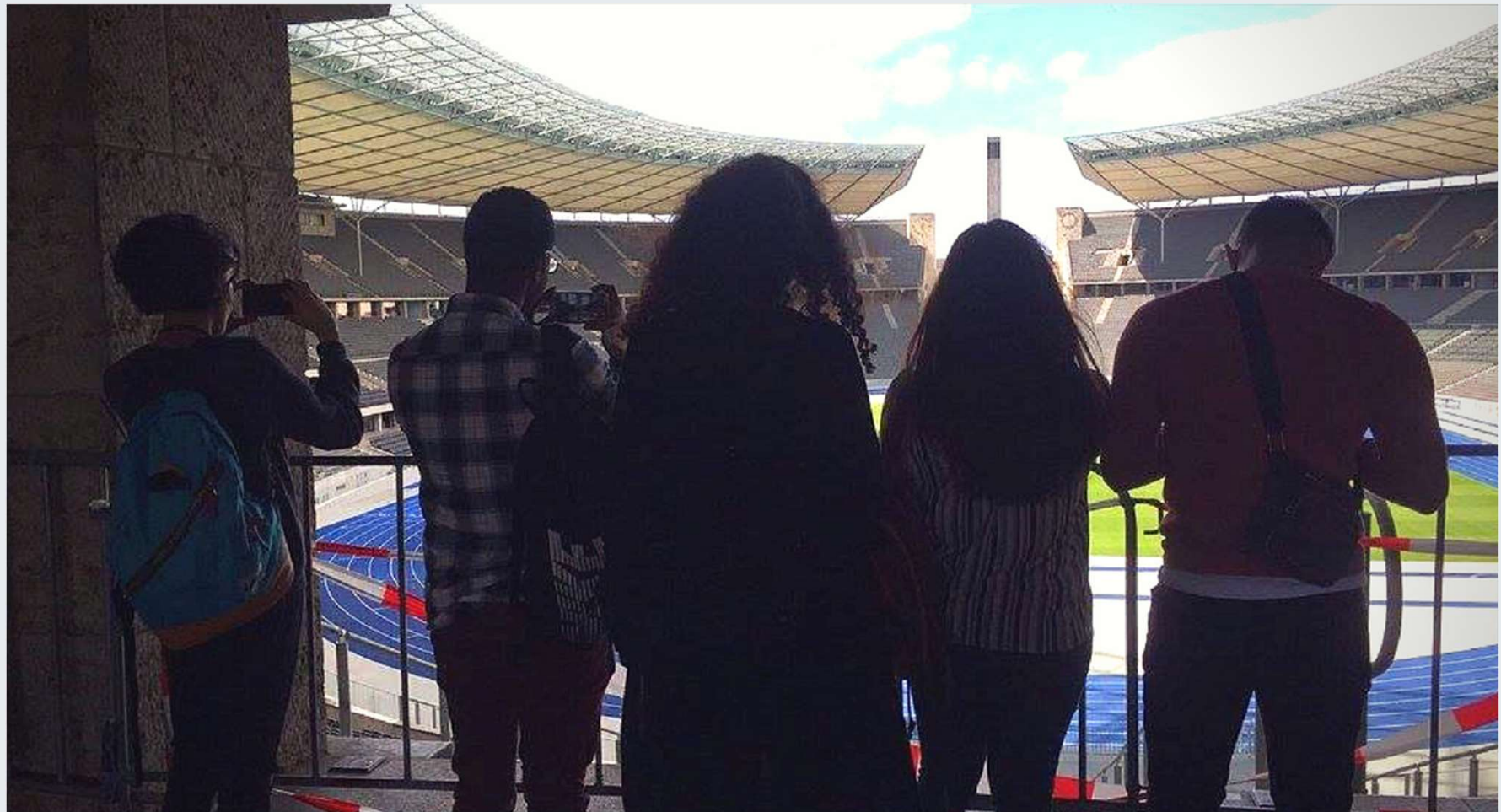
Autobiographical and local encounters

- A carefully choreographed course: a plethora of faces, foods, three hundred years of history, kings and queens, roaring twenties, crimes, wars, walls.
- Meeting eye witnesses to historical events in the place where they live is a privileged way of learning.
- Technology: The *Stolperstein* (stumbling stone) [app](#), for example, provides more background to little golden stone plaques embedded in the pavement in front of houses where victims of National Socialist terror used to live.
- The emotional tide participants, as a learning community and individuals, feel during this type of experiential learning experience is substantial.
- The learning community helps to make sense, to challenge and empower.

Community defined by students.

The site of the 1936 Olympic Games and an exercise in how to behave towards an impressive building built by the wrong people.

Mobile phones provide a handy 21st century coping method.



Community with the tutor: Intellectual streaking

“The nimble exposure of a teacher's thought processes, dilemmas, or failures - as a way of modeling both reflection-in-action and resilience... [T]aking a few risks and revealing deficits in knowledge or performance can be illuminating and valuable for all parties.”



Intellectual streaking

Benefit:

- Identification with tutor and - through this - the course
- Showing relevance of topics
- Creating understanding
- Creating visibility and relatability with particular student experience

Risk:

It needs to be contained and calculated. Class isn't teacher's therapy space.

Make it clear why teacher is saying what he*she is saying.

It mustn't distract from the point teacher is trying to make and be about the teacher.

Cultural exchange sessions

Mexico, South Korea and Britain in dialogue

At the culmination of our students' learning sessions on British themes, it productively reverses the student-teacher roles and encourages them to discuss and delineate how these issues resonated at home.

- Transferability of learning
- Creating a community amongst summer students across cultures, adding energy & excitement
- The idea of cultural exchange is central to the aims of the course and this session proved to be an invaluable venue for putting it into practice

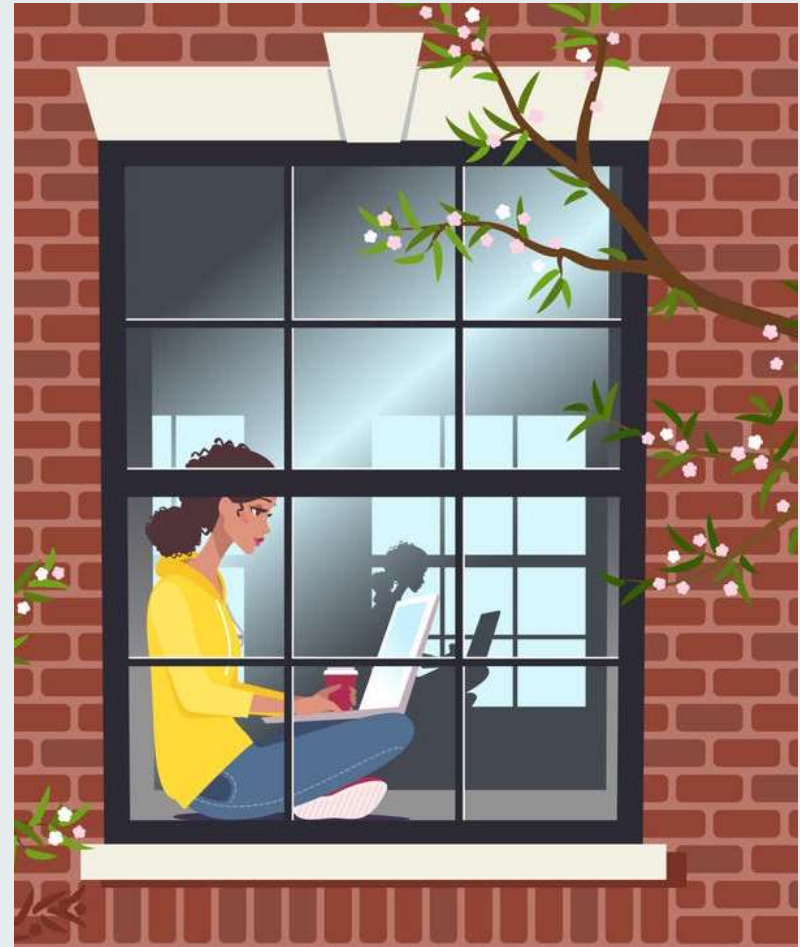
Building community - online

Online Learning Communities – why?

- Declining mental health in young people as a result of the pandemic and lockdowns
- The breakdown of formal and informal support.

"When asked what the main pressures were during the current lockdown, respondents mostly spoke of loneliness and isolation, concerns about school, college or university work and a breakdown in routine."

(Young Minds Autumn 2020)



Creating supportive learning communities and a sense of belonging has never been more important. **How do you do this online?**

Challenges for online short courses

Establishing trust and dialogue

Cultivating a sense of belonging

Peer support

How can students connect through a screen?

Interactivity

Diverse educational backgrounds

Providing a memorable 'experience'

Timezone issues for international students

Personalising content

Some examples of best practice

Defined cohorts – fosters a sense of belonging to a group, and provides opportunities for peer support

Ice breakers and 'getting to know each other' activities

Expectations – what do you expect of the students, and what can they expect from the course?

Class sizes – 15-25 students worked best in terms of engagement and group work. 20 an ideal number

Synchronous interactive tutorials and seminars – make the most of contact time with discussion and interaction

There is always scope to include more interactivity and group work

Learnings from the PADILEIA project

Partnership for Digital Learning and Increased Access. A SPHEIR project, funded by UK Aid and led by King's.

The aim is to support refugee students into higher education and employment through online and blended education.



- Building confidence and resilience through community, peer support and belonging.
- Responding to students' isolation, connecting them to a global learning community
- Personalisation of learning
- Connected learning – connecting content of course with students' lives and communities.
- Providing students opportunities to tell their own stories and express themselves
- A safe online space for a defined cohort, trusted support staff, community guidelines

Learnings: King's Summer and Winter Schools

Setting expectations – what students could expect from the course: interaction, discussion, connection. What were expected of students as **community members**?

Creating a dedicated social 'space' or virtual common room- maybe a channel, or a group chat / breakout room, where students can meet. To replace a physical meeting space.

Visual Cues: creating a sense of 'time' and 'space' to our first Winter Schools 'in London.'
Visual design of learning platforms – personalise these for your course.



Ideas and Questions

Selected References

Bearman, Margaret, Intellectual streaking: The value of teachers exposing minds (and hearts), Med Teach 2017

Cahill, Helen, Beadle, Sally, Farrelly, Anne, Forster, Ruth and Smith, Kylie, Building resilience in children and young people, Early Childhood Development (DEECD), University of Melbourne [Available online here](#)

Dodge, Rachel, et al. "The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing." International Journal of Wellbeing. 2012;2(3):222-235. [Available online here](#)

Schreiner LA. The "Thriving Quotient": A New Vision for Student Success. About Campus. 2010;15(2):2-10. [Available online here](#).

Sommer, Doris (2014). The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities. Durham and London: Duke University.

Universities UK International (undated). Widening Participation in Outward Student Mobility: A toolkit to support inclusive approaches: https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/Documents/Widening%20Participation%20in%20outward%20mobility_toolkit_web.pdf

Vande Berg, Michael, Paige, R. Michael, Hemming Lou, Kris (eds) (2012). Student learning abroad: What our student students are learning and what they are not and what we can do about it. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

Young Minds Report, Autumn 2020 <https://youngminds.org.uk/media/4119/youngminds-survey-with-young-people-returning-to-school-coronavirus-report-autumn-report.pdf>



Contact us

Dr Alexander Heinz, Chair of Summer Executive, King's College London
alexander.heinz@kcl.ac.uk

Hannah Bond, Associate Director Learning & Teaching, Summer Programmes, King's College London
hannah.2.bond@kcl.ac.uk

www.kcl.ac.uk/summer

Sign up to our Summer Times blog