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## **A CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF CULTURAL BELONGING IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

### **Abstract:**

This thesis argues that there is a specific type of relationship which, when adopted as an approach to teaching, can optimise the potential for Transformative Learning and that such an approach is particularly appropriate to foster in a Higher Vocational Education (HIVE) University which identifies as a Widening Participation (WP) institution.

To address the central argument of the thesis, I explain the additional responsibility of the HIVE educator in relation to their students to that of the traditional academic and how relationship is a medium through which this responsibility can be fulfilled. Secondly, I discuss the appropriateness of fostering a certain type of relationship which can help to realise this responsibility. Within the discussion, the concepts of intercultural communication and cultural empathy are highlighted as crucial aspects of relationships for transformation and for cultivating an organisational culture which can support transformative pedagogy. Having clarified the type of relationship being referred to, I explain how this relationship can operate as an approach to teaching and how such an approach has benefits beyond the immediate teaching situation, or specific programme of study in the HIVE university. In doing this, I make clear the essential role of the HIVE University in interrupting cycles of disadvantage and bring forth the idea of higher vocational education as a human service through which the society in which we all live can benefit. Finally, the potential challenges involved with fostering relationships which support Transformative Learning in the context of a HIVE university which is subject to the presence of a wider Neoliberal logic are presented.

### **Keywords:**

Teacher-Researcher, Transformative Learning, Social Justice, Higher Vocational Education

**JEL Classification:** I24