



Faculty of Design

2019

Improving wellbeing in universities: A transdisciplinary systems change approach

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Suggested citation:

van der Bijl-Brouwer, Mieke, Key, Tyler, Kligyte, Giedre, Malcolm, Bridget, Thurgood, Clementine and Reddy, Prasuna (2019) Improving wellbeing in universities: A transdisciplinary systems change approach. In: Relating Systems Thinking and Design (RSD8) 2019 Symposium, Oct 13-15 2019, Chicago, USA. Available at <http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/3236/>

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improving wellbeing in universities – a transdisciplinary systems change approach

Relating Systems Thinking & Design symposium 2019

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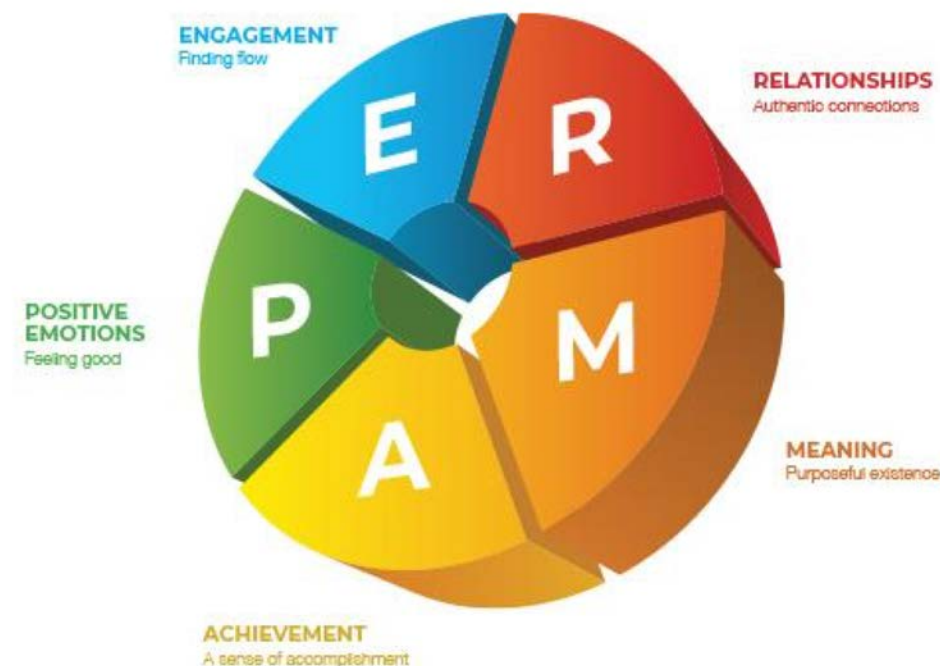
improving wellbeing in universities – a
transdisciplinary systems change approach



a systemic view on wellbeing

wellbeing is the meeting of subjective perceptions of self with objective health measures

PERMA (Seligman 2011)



Wheel of Wellbeing (2008)



wellbeing in universities

some statistics...

both university students and staff are at higher risk of mental-ill-health than that of the general population (Kinman & Johnson 2019)

students

- 84% of university students experience elevated psychological distress vs 29% of general population (n=6479, Stallman 2010)
- >40% of PhD students symptoms of depression, emotion or stress-related problems, or high levels of stress. (Guthrie et. al. 2017)

staff

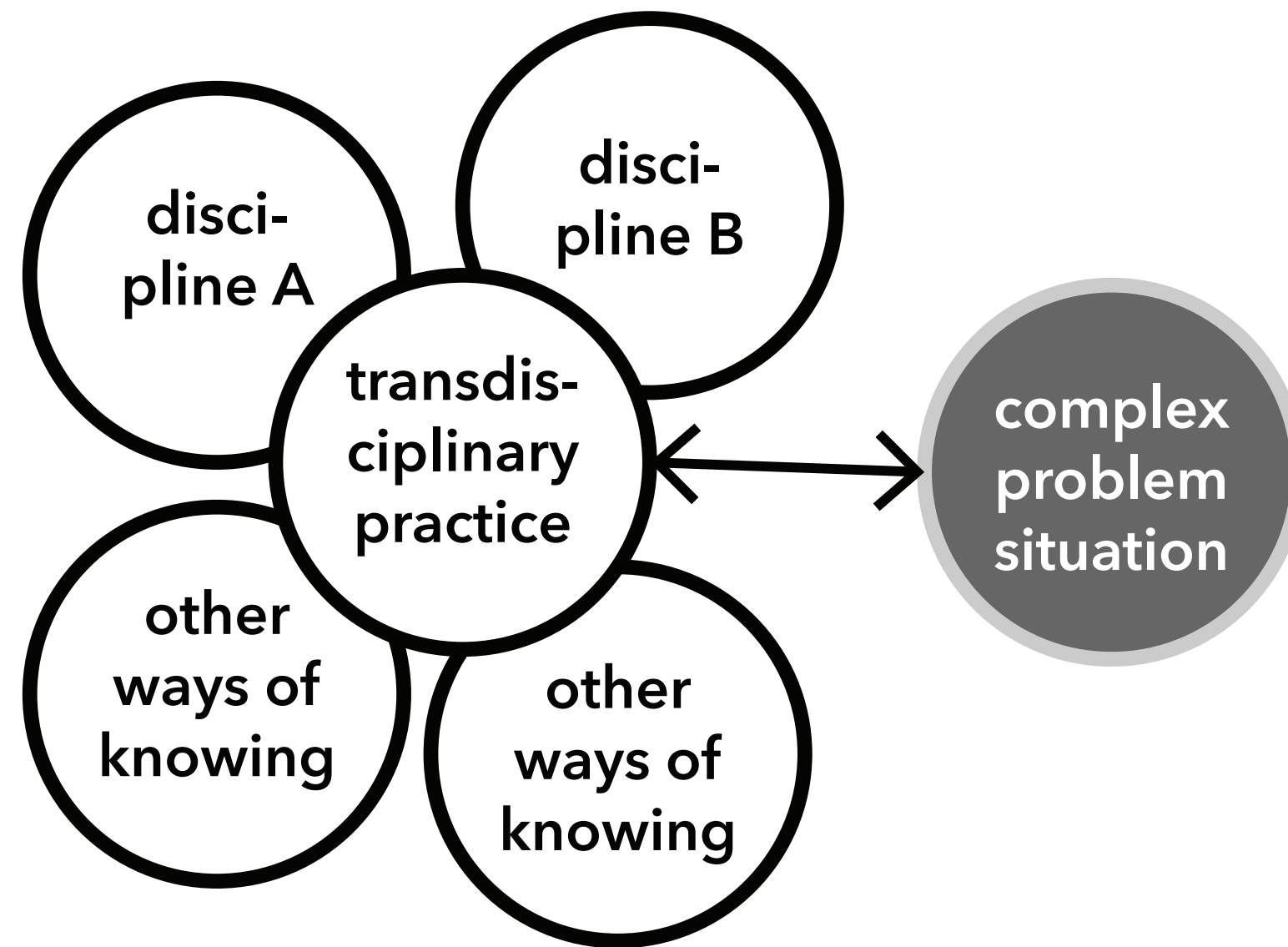
- Rates of "caseness" in academic staff avg. of 49% vs 39% of professionals (Kinman 2014)
- 36% of academics working more than 48 hours per week (Kinman 2014)



awareness raising

paradox:
increasing help-seeking with
already overburdened
counselling system.

a learning journey towards transdisciplinarity



a learning journey towards transdisciplinarity

transdisciplinary practices

- integrating knowledges/ participation
- action orientation
- purposeful, vision
- holistic, systemic approach
- continuously evolving by ongoing learning

Jantsch, E. (1972). Towards interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in education and innovation. In L. Apostel, G. Berger, A. Briggs, & G. Michaud (Eds.), *Interdisciplinarity, problems of teaching and research in universities*(pp. 97–121). Paris: OECD Publications

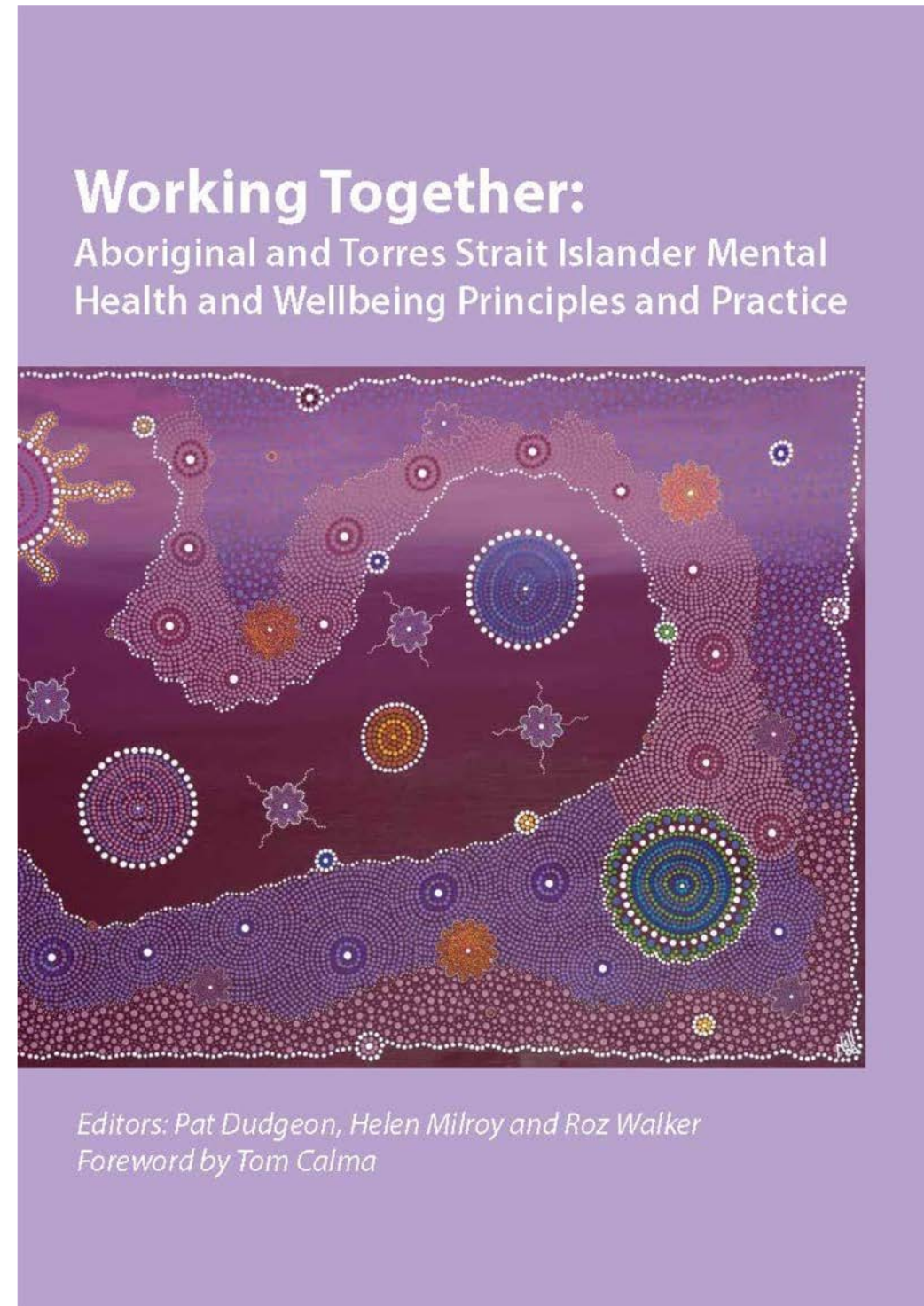
<https://medium.com/@miekevanderbijl/transdisciplinary-innovation-and-design-d19d1520ddca>

project: NSW wellbeing collaborative



with Dr. Clementine Thurgood & Lucy Klippan in partnership with the NSW Wellbeing Collaborative <https://wbcnsw.net>

Indigenous social & emotional wellbeing



Working together, 2014, Editors: Pat Dudgeon, Helen Milroy and Roz Walker; accessed <https://www.telethonkids.org.au>

a systemic view on wellbeing

wellbeing is the meeting of subjective perceptions of self, and the collective, with objective health measures

a systemic view on wellbeing innovation & research

staff and student initiatives



design by Kate Elton

source: https://www.etsy.com/au/listing/243640282/the-little-book-for-big-worries?ref=shop_home_feat_2

a learning journey towards transdisciplinarity

transdisciplinarity

- **integrating knowledge/ participation**
- **action orientation**
- purposeful, vision
- holistic, systemic approach
- ongoing learning

our approach

- *staff & students participate*
- *more action!*

a learning journey towards transdisciplinarity

transdisciplinarity

- integrating knowledge/ participation
- action orientation
- **purposeful, vision**
- holistic, systemic approach
- ongoing learning

our approach

- *holistic view on wellbeing*
- *integration of wellbeing, education & research*
- *work with what is already happening in the university..*
- *and connect these initiatives*



wellbeing research & innovation hub

with professor Prasuna Reddy, Bridget Malcolm, Tyler Key & others
Funded by UTS HR & Student Services



- how we work with people within the system is key
- we need a step-by-step evolutionary approach and be more explicit about how we learn

a learning journey towards transdisciplinarity

- integrating knowledge/ participation
- action orientation
- purposeful, vision
- holistic, systemic approach
- **ongoing learning**

transdisciplinary collaboration and reflexivity

ongoing learning

transdisciplinary approaches emphasise mutual learning between a range of participants through deliberate processes of reflexivity – “on-going scrutiny of the choices that are made when identifying and integrating diverse values, priorities, worldviews, expertise and knowledge” (Polk, 2015)

Polk, Merritt. "Transdisciplinary Co-Production: Designing and Testing a Transdisciplinary Research Framework for Societal Problem Solving." *Futures* 65 (2015/01/01/ 2015): 110-22.



student services hub

- A 'students as partners' project

reflexivity in the Student Service Hub project

- reflexive writing
- space for mutual learning

student services hub project

what is a student services hub?



design by UTS SSH team: Bethany Hooper, Jarnae Leslie, Eleanor Salazar, Tyler Key in partnership with Giedre Kligyte and Mieke van der Bijl-Brouwer

systems change?

reflection from project management office

“I think the university should have better processes. Maybe it's just consultation but even consultation's quite hard to do because we struggle to find other than giving out pizza vouchers and hoping that someone sees it.”

a transdisciplinary approach to academic wellbeing

- vision: a holistic approach: from individual wellbeing to 'community' wellbeing; from separate service to integrated in research & education
- a focus on relationships and how we work together
- an ongoing learning process
- what's next? ...

a transdisciplinary approach to academic wellbeing

questions for the RSD audience

- how can we help people adopt a systemic view of wellbeing in universities?
- what is required to further improve wellbeing in universities?
- what other academic theories or fields could contribute to understanding of wellbeing within universities?

thank you!

