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An Ethical Commitment: Responsibility, Care and Cosmopolitanism in the Internationalized University

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Introduction

The internationalization of higher education has decisively moved from being a scholarly tradition of mobility across borders to an almost purely economic concern. This is a trend that is most pronounced in countries such as England, Australia and the US in particular, who have become the dominant exporters of the higher education business or, as Allan Luke suggests, the global 'edubusiness' (Luke 2010). Alongside the growth of this edubusiness has developed a growing literature theorizing the implications of the shift to the student as consumer model of higher education (e.g. Kuo 2007; Lambert *et al.* 2007; Maringe 2011). For those of us working in international classrooms, particularly in the developed countries that are the main exporters of higher education globally, our relationships with international students are formed against a backdrop of an increasingly predominant consumerist model of higher education. In this chapter we will take a critical view of the shift towards a consumerist model of internationalized higher education, through a consideration of how this shift has eroded the moral basis for relationships with international students. However, there are signs of hope, and in the second part of the chapter we will be offering a philosophical approach based around the concepts of care, responsibility, and cosmopolitanism. We will argue these commitments, taken together, have the potential to re-establish an ethical commitment to students.

The foundations for this chapter reside in previous research by one author (Kelly) into internationalization in English higher education which led to a critical view of the higher education export business that turns students into customers (van der Wende *et al.* 2005; Coate 2009). As an indirect beneficiary of internationalization, however, Kelly was also privileged to work closely with a number of international students in the UK who were themselves researching various aspects of internationalization in higher education (see for example Kuo 2007; Welikala 2008; Takagi 2009). After leaving England for Ireland, Kelly's

interests in international student mobility continued through a project with Ganga on internationalization in Irish higher education (Coate and Rathnayake 2008).

Working together across cultural differences highlights the often uneasy, challenging and rewarding aspects of the internationalization of higher education. These aspects are brought to the fore in intercultural relationships between students and staff. Perhaps more so than with relations with students from the dominant culture of the 'host' country, these intercultural encounters highlight how necessary it is for successful pedagogical relationships to be based on trust (Curzon-Hobson 2002). A key concern, then, is that currently the driver behind these intercultural encounters is the market. Market relationships are based on trust only to the extent that the service being bought is satisfactorily delivered. Therefore, in the absence of any clear guidance as to how pedagogical relationships with international students are to be formed, apart from on the basis of a consumer relationship, questions can be raised about the ethics of the international education business. This is particularly the case when the product being 'sold' does not deliver the value that might reasonably be expected.

The Irish higher education context, which is the subject of this chapter, has opened up new avenues for exploration in relation to the global 'edubusiness' of higher education. Although Ireland is an English-speaking country (an advantage in the market-place), it has a small higher education system, with about 180,000 registered students of which 10% are international students. Ireland is therefore not a dominant exporter of higher education globally; however, there are signs that attention is turning in this direction. The economic drivers for international student recruitment are recently but noticeably entering the official discourse. For example, a report on international students in Irish higher education acknowledges that Ireland is not a 'significant player': a type of language which firmly establishes the economic rather than academic agenda (EI 2010). Even more telling was the recent closure of the International Education Board Ireland (an organization that played a somewhat similar role to the British Council's international education division) and the relocation of staff to the offices of Enterprise Ireland, the government organization responsible for helping Irish businesses to achieve global success. One of the first tasks in the new International Strategy, now being managed by Enterprise Ireland, is the development of the Education Ireland 'brand' in an attempt to capture a greater market share of international students (DES 2010).

Internationalization strategies in export countries are, as Marginson and van der Wende (2006) note, bound up in the new public management reforms that have swept across European, North American and Australian higher education systems. The modelling of higher education on business practices, with a drive towards efficiency, income generation, transparency and increased competition, has become a familiar 'template' that universities

around the world are copying. While the response to these global trends remains largely undocumented in the Irish case, it is clear that the template is being used to push through quite fundamental reforms. The new international strategy for Irish higher education encourages a 50% increase in international student numbers by 2015, for instance, in the stated effort to catch up with global competitors.

As many commentators have pointed out, however, the templates may be the same all over the world but the local contexts vary. Irish higher education has a long way to go before it becomes a global 'player', and until then patterns of recruitment will be somewhat *ad hoc*. Ireland's history as a missionary country also gives a local flavour to some of the attitudes towards international students, particularly students from developing countries. This 'charitable' view of the value of Irish higher education in relation to 'poorer' or less developed countries was expressed to us on a number of occasions during interviews with academics and managers. Whilst it may be difficult to object to a charitable, rather than profit-driven, view of the value of internationalization, it unfortunately positions the students who travel to Ireland from the developing world as being in need of 'help' or aid, and can also shade into somewhat anxious feelings about the 'burden' such charity imposes, as we will go on to discuss. This type of asymmetrical power relationship is not the typical student-teacher relationship. It is instead an unequal relationship between those who are deemed to 'have' and those who 'have not'. Again, it seems necessary to question the ethics of a relationship with students that starts from such a peculiar position of inequality. Therefore, in order to explore some of the possibly unwelcome side-effects inherent in the internationalization templates that higher education institutions are adapting to all over the developed world, we will relate some of the challenges faced by international students in Ireland.

This chapter will therefore proceed by moving between a macro analysis of global trends to a micro analysis of the experiences of international students before turning to philosophy as a way of making sense of the phenomenon of international education. These philosophical arguments call for an ethical commitment to our educational practices. Here we will explore the concepts of care, responsibility, and cosmopolitanism as potential means of offering a moral framework for our relationships. The global picture supports our experiences and research at a much more local level. At the same time, the emergence of particular philosophical arguments within this contemporary climate, offer alternative perspectives to the value of international student mobility that delegitimize the dominant, economic drivers.

Ireland offers almost a blank slate in terms of generating an account of recent developments in international student recruitment and the experiences of international students. Both quantitative and qualitative data are thin on the ground. Higher education institutions do not collect data in a uniform manner, leading to acknowledged difficulties of reporting statistics and trends accurately (EI 2010). More qualitative studies may begin to emerge, but their absence is notable particularly in relation to the wealth of research on the experiences of international students in the UK and Australia. However, there are a few studies which give some insight into the student and staff experiences. Dunne (2009), for example, explores home students' perceptions of international students in a university in Dublin, and Keane (2009) touches on the issue of international students in her research on diversity, but there seems to be little else.

In 2008-09, with the funding of a small grant from the National University of Ireland, Galway, we conducted a research project on international student recruitment, focusing on our institution and conducting interviews with staff and students. At the time, Kelly was a lecturer in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education at NUI Galway and Ganga was a doctoral student from Sri Lanka. We worked closely together in order to gain insights into many of the daily challenges that international students faced. Researching the category of 'international students' as one group is fraught with the danger that they will be portrayed largely as an homogenous group who are passive recipients of an education in developed countries (or the 'global north'). Madge *et al.* (2009) suggest that it is more helpful to recast 'international students' (and arguably the staff who work with them) as 'globalized agents' (Madge *et al.* 2009), emphasizing both individuality and agency, or free choice. Both Kelly and Ganga had arrived in Ireland as willing participants in the higher education marketplace: Kelly from the UK for employment opportunities, and Ganga as an internationally mobile postgraduate student. The prospect of global agency is now a possibility available to many of us in contemporary higher education, although the patterns of mobility follow particular historic, economic, postcolonial and geographical trends. In particular, the patterns of mobility into Ireland follow trends that deserve much more attention than they have received in the past.

For example, one Sri Lankan student we encountered through this research received an aid scholarship in order to register for a doctoral degree in Ireland. These types of scholarships are a significant, and possibly under-researched, aspect of international student mobility (see Adnett 2010). At first glance they seem to eschew the concerns of the student as consumer model, given that their underlying rationale is development: the donor is assisting the recipient through the provision of higher education. Scholarships such as these are, however, a form of 'tied aid' which require the recipient to purchase from donating countries, and these bi-lateral agreements ensure an outflow of students from the global south to the global north. The various imbalances that this one-way traffic has engendered, such as lack of capacity in

some countries to develop their own national education systems, are now receiving critical examination (Bashir 2007; Adnett 2010). Altbach, for instance, has drawn attention to the 'unprecedented flow of academic talent - particularly from poor to wealthy countries' (2007: xiv). Khadria (2001: 62) calls it the 'repatriation of remittances' as money flows from poor to rich countries through international student fees. It therefore is likely that these forms of 'aid' are exacerbating rather than relieving global inequalities, leading Adnett (2010:631) to describe them as 'beggar thy (poor) neighbour' policies.

By situating an individual case within this global context we recognize there is a danger of seeming to privilege structural inequalities over individual choices and agency, which again reinforces the need to think more about globalized agency alongside a recognition of structural inequalities. At the individual level the global patterns of economic flows from the south to the north recede from view, and in their place emerges a complex picture of individual histories, difficult choices, opportunities and varying degrees of simultaneously empowering and disempowering experiences. Sidhu (2006) also helps us to see how these histories, experiences and choices are often bound up in postcolonial patterns of international relations. International students are individually taking advantage of the opportunities they have been afforded: collectively they are potentially adding up to an outflow of revenue from the poorest to the richest. These trends could be described as a Sheriff of Nottingham funding model writ large, to borrow the terminology being used to describe the pumping of funding into elite universities (Currie 2009).

The case we are presenting is a Sri Lankan student who we will call Devni. The award of a prestigious scholarship enabled her to embark on a doctorate in Ireland and she brought her husband and teenage son with her. She and her husband both had a leave of absence from their professional posts and intended to enrol their son into a school in Ireland. Shortly after arriving, visa and immigration changes meant that they could no longer avail themselves of publicly funded education but would have had to pay private fees. They sent their son back to live with close family in Sri Lanka, thereby splitting their tight knit family and exacerbating the homesickness and culture shock they were both experiencing. Their encounter with the rather harsh rules of the immigration services is not unique and highlights a tension that many export countries have faced: they want the 'business' of higher education trade, but the flow of non-national students across borders brings into action the immigration rules largely designed to keep non-nationals out. The populist 'fear' of immigrants that characterizes discourses in many developed countries is also strong in Ireland, thereby tainting the experiences of international students with racism. They are 'othered' from the very start within the dominant national culture.

During the course of our research the student visa issue received national attention when a North American student was threatened with deportation after the police discovered she had been sending her son to a state-funded primary school. When we interviewed a staff member in the international office of the university, she admitted that the 'problem' of increased immigration to Ireland in recent years had resulted in a concern about the state provision of education to immigrants and had led to the policy of prohibiting student visa holders to avail themselves of state-funded education. That the 'immigration problem' (whether real or imagined) could be applied to international students shows a convenient disregard for the fact that students are not immigrants but are temporary residents, and that they generate a large amount of revenue for Ireland rather than being a drain on resources. A further challenge is that it is the police – the Garda National Immigration Bureau - who deal with student visa registrations and renewals in Ireland, thereby causing distress for some international students who have never had to respond to police interrogations and feel highly intimidated when doing so. Indeed, the biggest complaint from the international students we interviewed was about their experiences of the visa system.

Another salient feature of Devni's experience as an international student, which may be particularly pronounced for female students from certain cultural backgrounds, was her reluctance to live on her own without her husband. The lack of appropriate postgraduate accommodation for mature international students is a problem that Irish universities will need to tackle if they are to become, as the intention seems to be, global players. In common with many other postgraduate students in Ireland, Devni and her husband rented a room in a shared house with other students. Their lack of familiarity with other cultures created some anxieties, and in common with what research elsewhere has shown (Dunne 2009), Devni was not comfortable with the drinking and partying culture which is a predominant feature of Irish student life. Devni found the student partying culture very disruptive, with frequent late-night disturbances from loud, inebriated students returning home from the clubs. Even perhaps more subtly, but no less importantly, she was reluctant to cook curries in the house in case her housemates were not used to the smell of Asian spices. When her husband was required to return to his job in Sri Lanka at the end of his leave (desperately wanting to work again, having not been allowed to gain employment under immigration regulations in Ireland), they both decided he should stay. He was as reluctant to leave Devni in Ireland as she was anxious about the prospect of being on her own. This resulted in her husband losing his job in Sri Lanka.

The economic costs to Devni's family through taking advantage of this 'aid' were high. These types of scholarship, whilst prestigious and therefore a significant long-term investment, arguably bring more immediate advantages to the Irish universities who can 'market' this international initiative with pride. Again, however, the discourse of charity positions the

scholarship receivers as the needy and deserving poor: the World Bank Scholarship website notes that two-thirds of its scholarship holders are from 'humble and poor backgrounds'. We were surprised to find this discourse also used at the International Student Induction day in our university, which we both attended in September 2008. We were sitting with several Sri Lankan students as different presenters from the university spoke to about 800 international students, and learned a number of important characteristics of the Irish higher education market.

What was striking about sitting in a large sports hall with 800 international students was the extent to which the Sri Lankan students were already 'othered' on this occasion. Almost all of the students were young, white and North American. The historical connections between Ireland and the USA have been capitalized on by Irish universities and, even though US higher education is much more of an export country than an import country, undergraduate students have proven willing to study abroad for a semester in Ireland. Their motivation to come to Ireland is often to take advantage of a type of 'educational tourism' (Nielson 2011). The impact they have on Irish universities is perhaps not the type of 'internationalization' of higher education that is discussed in the literature: the potential benefits of intercultural exchanges are somewhat diminished by the fact that these international students are in Ireland only for a few months and do not have the opportunities or motivation to benefit from cross-cultural exchange. The potential for Irish students to benefit from their presence is also diminished by the fact that US students come from a hegemonic and dominant cultural background. Yet their presence generates much revenue and therefore much attention from the international office. Those who have travelled from further afield on aid scholarships are positioned quite differently within this student market.

Throughout the day as we listened to presentations from various offices of the university it became clear just how much effort was focused directly on the young, white, North American students rather than mature postgraduate students from Asian or other backgrounds. The advice given to the students by the Health Centre, for example, was to avoid 'getting laid' and going home pregnant. For a mother who had just sent her son home, this advice was particularly misguided and painful. We need, as Luke (2010: 61) reminds us, to engage with 'difference within difference'. The differences within differences, however, go well beyond easy distinctions between the students from the developed world and those from less developed countries. The international officer welcomed the few scholarship recipients from 'less developed countries' such as Sri Lanka and Ethiopia, and one of the Sri Lankans sitting next to us expressed her annoyance at Sri Lanka being placed in the same category as Ethiopia on the development continuum. She whispered 'Sri Lanka is more developed than that'. Exploring this 'difference within difference' may raise difficult questions, but those in the developed educational system need to engage with these differences if the aim is to achieve better

intercultural understandings. The tendency to categorize all international students as somehow similar may leave the international students from less well-represented countries feeling alienated.

For those of us who find ourselves working in the export edubusiness (Luke 2010) of higher education, the chaotic, complex and often contradictory nature of the whole enterprise can be bewildering. Although we might imagine the responsibility of universities to be education, the explicit endorsement of internationalization becomes complicated when that strategy is based on the one hand, for example, on exploiting a rich market of transient young Americans who want to party for a few months (acknowledged by university staff who warn them on induction day not to get too drunk and/or pregnant), and on the other by offering aid through a third party to those from poor countries who are perceived to be worthy beneficiaries of an education in the global north. A greater awareness of these drivers behind the strategy to recruit more students can go some way towards enabling a better understanding of whether these drivers provide a moral foundation for educational relationships, or not.

The strategy in Ireland to increase international student numbers by 2015 (DES 2010) comes at a time of change in Irish higher education. As global rankings of universities have become accepted as a 'plausible' measure of a higher education system's global positioning (Hazelkorn 2009; Marginson and van der Wende 2006), institutional processes are adapted and geared towards setting targets and improving outcomes within the parameters of the ranking systems. Internationalization is seen as a key indicator of success, because 'national pre-eminence is no longer enough' (University of Warwick 2007, cited by Hazelkorn 2009: 18). The imperative to compete globally strips away the moral values of our relationships within universities, as higher education becomes less of a public good and more of a status good, bought and sold through international markets or donated to those deemed to be the deserving poor.

The enterprise of this global edubusiness provokes an internal logic within higher education institutions that focuses on performance, outcomes and the never-ending pursuit of excellence. Certainly the rise of managerialism within universities in the last few decades has been well documented in the higher education literature. What we will now turn to in the second part of this chapter is a philosophical argument for a different set of parameters to measure the 'worth' of higher education. A critical view of the predominant drivers shaping the competitive international 'arms race' of higher education systems (Hazelkorn 2009) highlights some of the values we are neglecting. If a sense of higher education as a public good is to be preserved, and even further developed as a greater global good, we need to be more explicit about the ethical commitments we can make in terms of placing a higher value on humanity than the market.

On being careless

Difficult questions arise once the ethical dilemmas of the international student market are exposed. One of the key questions is of complicity. At what point do those working in the global edubusiness become complicit in supporting the economic and competitive drivers of the international student market-place? It might be easy to establish that those working in the frontlines of international student recruitment, such as the recruiting agents whose job it is to find high fee-paying students for the dominant export institutions, are complicit. Yet what about the academics who find increasing numbers of international students in their classrooms? Berg (2006) suggests that academics often occupy the paradoxical position of contesting and reinforcing neo-liberal practices (cited in Madge *et al.* 2009). Understanding better the global pattern of the movement of resources from the south to the north through the 'gift' of western scholarships might, for example, enable us to reconsider whether to encourage a future scholarship holder from a developing country to come to Ireland. Not to question the value of this 'gift' would entail the suppression of ethical considerations, an activity that Zipin and Brennan (2003) suggest has become commonplace amongst academics in contemporary higher education.

Accepting some level of complicity in the global phenomenon of the higher education edubusiness necessitates a rethinking of what we are doing as educators. An alternative approach might be to ignore change: one academic we spoke to about our research admitted to simply not knowing whether she had international students in her classroom. If there is, however, a will to respond to increased internationalization and to question the relentless drive towards a market-driven higher education system, there are a number of conceptual frameworks which can help re-cast the role of educators. The first question to pose in order to open up this more philosophical discussion is deceptively simple: *who cares?*

The philosophical concept of care in education has a long history, perhaps most well known recently through the work of Noddings (1992; 2003). The idea that educators begin the process of educating through a commitment to care for the individuals they are working with is subtly profound. It involves, as Noddings (2003) suggests, a sense of oneself as the 'I' who cares but also a commitment to the 'you' who is cared for. As she argues, in this conceptualization of care, the "one-caring" and the "cared-for" are reciprocally dependent' (Noddings 2003: xiii). Furthermore, caring in education involves developing relationships of trust, openness, and inclusiveness (O'Brien 2010), in an explicit commitment to the improvement of human relations.

Accepting a duty of care might seem to be a tall order in the contemporary university. Arguments against inducements to care include the notion that care is better provided by the counsellors and support services for students than the teachers themselves. Whilst there may be a rationale for separating pastoral and academic responsibilities, this might cause anxiety for some students whose previous experience with teachers was one which privileged their pastoral, care-giving role. Students who encounter personal difficulties and approach their tutors might find it disappointing and confusing to be referred to the student counselling service, for example. For those academics who do take on pastoral roles, research suggests that in Anglo-European universities they are more likely to be women (e.g. Morley 1998). Care is therefore a gendered concept in higher education, given the acknowledged imbalance between women and men educators in relation to care-giving duties. Yet before we dismiss the duty of care as an inappropriate burden placed largely on women, it is worthwhile considering that engendering a general ethos of care within the university might offer an alternative vision to the unequal relations that tend to be reproduced in higher education. A commitment to care can be fostered as a moral virtue rather than seen as a duty that needs to be fulfilled.

The work of Kathleen Lynch and colleagues (Lynch 2010; Gummell et al 2009) has brought new insights into the concept of care in higher education. They argue that the performance-driven culture of contemporary entrepreneurial universities is a care-less culture. The imperative for universities to be engines of economic growth has taken precedence over the desire for many within universities to contribute to the development of humanity. They illustrate this through their research on senior managers in Irish higher education institutions who acknowledge the difficulty of rising up the hierarchy of management roles if duties of care are required to be given outside the home. The performance-driven culture of higher education necessitates a commitment to sacrificing home lives for the demands of the organization, and those in senior management positions in universities are now quite explicit about the extraordinary demands that work places on them.

Lynch (2010) draws a useful analogy between a culture of work in which care responsibilities are not valued outside the home, with a general culture of care-lessness inside the organization. In other words, there is a fundamental lack of humanity in an organization that does not recognize that many people have responsibilities as care givers. A care-less ethos is one in which values become skewed towards the needs of the organization, over and above the needs of the people within it.

Masschelein and Simons (2002) pose a similar concern but describe it in different terms: they write about the pressures of the international university as exerting an immunization against 'being together'. In other words, the knowledge workers in entrepreneurial universities are

compelled to act on an individually competitive basis rather than acting in the interests of the community. For Masschelein and Simons (2002), the subjectivities of contemporary education workers are interpellated, through a focus on outputs and performance, as entrepreneurial selves. The processes which enact this interpellation operate in disregard to the concept of community, in which the subjects are united by common obligations rather than individual interests. As the authors go on to suggest, these obligations are about what we owe to each other, rather than what is owed to us through our actions. Again, echoing Noddings' insistence (2003) on the interdependence between the 'one-caring' and the 'cared-for', this particular view of 'being together' recognizes that 'we are irreducibly connected with others' (Masschelein and Simons 2002: 602). We accept responsibility for others without knowing what that responsibility will entail and, in accepting that responsibility, we lose some of our own autonomy.

The lack of care in the contemporary university, then, will not be redressed by, for instance, identifying specific tasks that need to be done to support international students. The concepts of care and community that are being proposed above are about the responsibility to others as a fundamental mechanism of accounting for ourselves (Butler 2005). We would not know, for instance, how to 'care' for someone in Devni's position prior to meeting her. The university cannot have all the necessary support structures in place to ensure that all of the challenges she faced were mitigated or relieved in some way, and this holds true for our encounters with students from any other country. The issue here is not about identifying the needs of a group called 'international students', or defining the 'lack' of capabilities that international students might display when living and studying in a different country (as they are often perceived to be 'deficient' in some way or other in the literature). If we reduce 'care' to fulfilling others' needs, we refuse to address the lack within ourselves: our lack of willingness to discover what others will offer to us and what we will offer in return. The concept of care that we are drawing out here, therefore, is more about the recognition that we, and others in the university, are committed to an openness in our relationships with each other. We are open to the possibility that international students (and indeed other 'globalized agents') will ask of us things that we cannot predict, and we are open to the richness that this relationship offers to us.

The heart of the criticisms that are being made about the contemporary university then are that the managerial focus on outputs rather than processes, and individual competition rather than community and humanity, is developing a culture of distrust between individuals at the expense of the trusting relations that are essential to successful pedagogical relationships. Particularly in a globalized higher education system, a careless and distrustful culture is a disastrous one from which to invite others to join us. Therefore some of the theorists and philosophers who are writing about globalization and higher education are promoting a fundamental shift away from increased marketization, towards a vision of a cosmopolitan ethos

which starts from a foundation of improving humanity rather than the economy (e.g. Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Rivzi 2009). Cosmopolitanism entails an ethical commitment to responsibility for others, and these are the final, related concepts we wish to consider.

Committing Oneself

The history of cosmopolitanism is sometimes traced back to the Greek philosophers, who understood the term to mean 'citizens of the world' committed to global humanity over and above the local (Nussbaum 1996; Rivzi 2009). There have been more recent formulations of cosmopolitanism within the literature on globalization (e.g. Appiah 2006) in which new, ethical relationships are imagined that cross national boundaries. For political and social theorists, cosmopolitanism offers a potential reshaping of the forces of globalization that cause global inequalities and injustices. For educational philosophers, such as Todd (2009) and Rivzi (2009), cosmopolitanism offers the potential to open new educational spaces in which global connectivity is the predominant ethos. Rivzi (2009) in particular elucidates an educational agenda in which global humanity takes primacy over local concerns. He argues for a development of 'epistemic virtues' that recognize the situatedness of students within a globalized world, and our interconnectedness with others on a global scale.

Looking through this lens of cosmopolitanism by way of the work of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (2006) brings a new understanding to these ethical commitments and epistemic virtues. Levinas proposes that all individuals have a responsibility towards the Other, and that all individuals are Others to us. For Levinas, the Other is always an unknown and is unknowable, but it is our responsibility to accept this unknowability. Any attempts we might make to 'know' the Other before we meet is an act of injustice, or symbolic violence, to the Other. As argued previously (Coate 2009), much of the literature on international students in western higher education attempts to 'know' who these students are in order to define their needs. Whilst much of that work is valuable and necessary, the philosophical argument that all Others are unknown is quite a powerful way of reframing the debate. Particularly in a globalized world, in which more of us are mobile, we must accept that easy categorizations of the Other are increasingly hard to sustain. Devni, for instance, initially assumed that Kelly was Irish, in the same way that many of us teaching in higher education have made assumptions in the past about whether certain students are international or 'home' students that proved to be incorrect. The students may also make assumptions about each other: an Irish student informed us that she sometimes worries about the challenges of working in groups with international students and has concerns about the work being slowed down due to language difficulties. We therefore need to find ways of encouraging students, as globalized agents, to open up to each other as well.

The consequences of opening ourselves to the Other are profound. As Levinas (2006: 29-30) says: 'The relationship with Others challenges me, empties me of myself and keeps on emptying me by showing me ever new resources. I did not know I was so rich.' What is accepted within this commitment to the Other is an acknowledgement of interdependence. Our selves are inextricably bound to the Other. This, then, is the type of epistemic virtue that theorists such as Rivzi (2009) are advocating as appropriate for a globalized world, and that we are suggesting can form the basis of an ethical commitment as educators. Our interconnectivity as citizens of the world then becomes the new backdrop for international student mobility and our relations with each other.

Conclusion

As policy-makers and managers in Irish higher education institutions set new targets for international student recruitment in the hopes of generating more income for a beleaguered system, it may be that we are setting our hopes too high. Suggesting that we make ethical commitments in our relationships with those who enter our institutions is not likely to be high on the agenda of the decision makers. The prevailing performance-driven, outputs-focused culture is also difficult to challenge, particularly now that a national concern with the efficient spending of public funds has become firmly entrenched.

However, accepting an ethical commitment and a moral responsibility within education is a starting point. Otherwise we are left feeling and being complicit within unethical relationships, as Zipin and Brennan (2003) warn can happen as a consequence of working within the norms and the 'habitus' of the managerial university. At a certain point our own actions become unethical, and surely there is merit in deciding at what stage we begin to resist and reformulate an alternative vision. The work of Rivzi (2009) is valuable in this regard, as he clearly elucidates an alternative 'imaginary' in which we help students (and each other) to:

'examine the ways in which global processes are creating conditions of economic and cultural exchange that are transforming our identities and communities; and that, unreflexively, we may be contributing to the production and reproduction of those conditions, through our uncritical acceptance of the dominant ways of thinking about global connectivity' (2009: 266).

It is perhaps all too easy to rely on an uncritical acceptance of the perceived impact of globalization and far harder to critically reflect on our interconnectivity with others in the world.

There is, after all, an Irish tradition of taking pride in international connections: for example by maintaining strong relations with North America which absorbed a large part of the Irish diaspora, but also by the portrayal of Ireland as welcoming to others. The Irish tourism agency is called 'Fáilte Ireland', or 'Welcome' in Irish. Indeed, the new Education in Ireland 'brand' is a shamrock with the tagline 'warmest of welcomes'. The warm welcome might be a celebrated symbol of Irish culture, but the reality for international students suggests a slightly different experience. The demands to make repeated visits to the Garda (police) stations for registrations and visa renewals; the strict requirements of student visa holders which make it nearly impossible for them to bring dependent family members with them; the lack of appropriate accommodation for postgraduate students with families; the lack of understanding or willingness of some academic staff to familiarize themselves with the needs of international students; and the generally very busy nature of academic life which results in limited time to meet with students all add up to an experience that can feel quite unwelcoming. Obviously these challenges are not unique to Irish higher education, but portraying the Irish experience as warmly welcoming might give international students certain expectations that will not always be met.

Having said all of that, the indirect benefits of globalized agency are powerful incentives to work towards a more ethical future for international higher education. The friendship that we are now trying to maintain between the distance that stretches from Ireland to Sri Lanka is well worth the challenges of intermittent email access and demanding working lives. The strength of intercultural friendships, pedagogical encounters and working relationships arguably begins when two people bridge cultural differences and decide that they do, emphatically, *care*.

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