

International education and (dis)embodied cosmopolitanisms

Ravinder Kaur Sidhu & Gloria Dall'Alba

School of Education, The University of Queensland

This paper is a critical examination of practices and representations that constitute international education. While international education has provided substantial contributions and benefits for nation-states and international students, we question the discourses and practices which inform the international education export industry. The 'brand identities' of receiving or host countries imply that they are welcoming, respectful of multiculturalism and have a well established intellectual history, in contrast to international students' embodied experiences. There is also a tendency to represent and regard international students as disembodied learners. We conclude that these disjunctures between disembodied representations and embodied experiences are undermining the kinds of cosmopolitan sensibilities that international education claims to provide.

Keywords: international education, internationalisation, higher education, marketing practices, cosmopolitanism, embodied learner

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Address for correspondence: Dr Ravinder Sidhu, School of Education, The University of Queensland, Brisbane Qld 4072, Australia. Email: r.sidhu@uq.edu.au

Introduction

Although the development of an education export industry is relatively recent in higher education, international education has a long history of substantial contributions to capacity building in nation-states and among students around the globe. For the purposes of this paper, we refer to international education as the provision of higher education beyond national or regional borders. It incorporates onshore and offshore provision of higher education to students from outside the country in which the provider institution is based. International education currently includes twinning arrangements between universities from different countries, foreign university branch campuses, e-learning programs for students located in other countries, study abroad components and student exchange across national borders.

Once studied in predominantly state-centric terms – as instruments of foreign policy, postcolonial nation-building and modernisation projects – presently international education is embedded in multiple and contradictory discursive fields ranging from ‘service and knowledge economies’ to ‘global cities’ and ‘creative classes’, from ‘global peace’ to signifiers of cosmopolitan identity. These discourses assume visibilities in images, brands and ideas, and are subverted or, more commonly, taken up by individuals, institutions, places and governments in different ways (Collins, 2006; Lewis, 2005; Sidhu, 2009).

Marketing discourses, in particular, deserve close scrutiny, as much can be learnt from investigating their use by universities and education brokers in describing and constituting international education. Understanding the assumptions and claims in these discourses places us in a stronger position to ensure their accuracy, as well as their relevance as an information source for intending international students. Indeed, the recent Baird Review into the legislation that regulates international education in Australia highlighted the importance of “ensuring accurate information and ethical recruitment” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010). The Review was announced in 2009 following extensive media publicity surrounding Indian students in Australia, where aggrieved students from the vocational education sector repeatedly pointed to slippages in what was promised in promotional materials compared with the realities they encountered on the ground. While it is entirely valid to highlight the strengths of universities and nation-states in education marketing, it is equally important that we

critically examine the embodied subjectivities assembled for these students and read these against the complexities they encounter as raced and gendered subjects.

In scrutinising these discourses, this predominantly conceptual and analytical paper is concerned with two questions: First, what kinds of identities are assembled for international students through the enterprise of international education, both in marketing and academic discourse? We address this by contrasting the embodied subjectivities assembled through marketing discourse against the politics of corporeality that animate transnational lives. Here, we follow Turner's (2002) call for the consideration of the body as a site for the realisation of cosmopolitan awareness, given that it highlights the vulnerabilities and commonalities that bind people together. Second, and related to the first question, what kinds of identities are nation-states scripting for themselves to succeed in the highly competitive international education market? In the context of ongoing struggles to open up education to be a service governed by the World Trade Organization (Sidhu, 2007), the task of installing particular meanings about international education markets remains an important project. We capture state identities through the micropractices that inform the brand identities of three education-exporting nation-states.

In pursuing these questions, we are interested in disrupting mainstream narratives that constitute and perpetuate international education as a series of disembodied flows, largely unmediated by the practices of nation-states and simply a response to 'globalisation'. We do so by comparing and contrasting representations of international education on two scales – the nation and the individual body. Following the work of feminist geographers (see Nagar et al, 2003), we acknowledge the importance of scale as a discursive and political tool. We argue that disembodiment is a political technology to install the 'naturalness' and unproblematic nature of 'globalisation' and global education markets. We acknowledge the long-standing contributions of distance modes of education, which also rest on an assumed level of disembodiment – students are usually dispersed in different geographical sites with minimum face-to-face contact with educators. However, we suggest that these earlier educational forms were often motivated by access and equity considerations, in contrast to existing expressions of disembodiment. The assumed disembodiment in international education narratives dictates particular identities for learners, teachers and researchers, which can make them subject to discourses of marketisation and globalisation, thus disempowering them as agents of change. We conclude with the

observation that expressions of cosmopolitanism enacted in international education marketing discourses are overwhelmingly corporate in nature and, by implication, serve as marketing devices for neoliberalism. This limits the space for more emancipatory expressions of cosmopolitanism:

Cosmopolitanism matters if it offers an emancipatory perspective, in which emancipation refers to what is relevant and of benefit to the world majority. In general, ... cosmopolitanism is emancipatory if it contributes to rebalancing corporate, political and social globalization. (Nederveen Pieterse, 2006, p. 1248)

The structure of the paper, then, is as follows. In Section One, we identify the disembodied learner to be a long-standing subject of western epistemology. We argue that ignoring the body and embodiment can mean the interest-laden nature of knowledge and the situatedness of knowledge production are not fully acknowledged, making it easier to disseminate and impose 'one-size-fits-all' educational prescriptions. Section Two analyses the branding practices of education exporting nations, focusing on three institutions that can be regarded as education brokers: the British Council's Education Counselling Service (ECS), the US-based Institute of International Education (IIE), and Australia's IDP Education. By focusing on how these nation-states represent themselves and their international student customers, we are able to point to the kinds of national, institutional and individual subjectivities sponsored through contemporary expressions of international education. We conclude with some comments on the broader project of re-writing state, society and market relations that have made neoliberalism ascendant. We argue that the imposition of an economic subjectivity on international students as rational, choice-exercising consumers, preoccupied with a desire for positional goods and instrumental learning, effectively minimises the role of education exporting nations to promoting surface learning, individualised social advantage and selective mobilities. These agendas steer institutions away from their responsibilities to foster knowledges and practices that contribute to global civic responsibilities and the more inclusive arrangements that are necessary to facilitate 'compassion, human rights, solidarity, risk management and peacefulness' (Hannerz, 2007, p. 301).

Unsettling Flows: The Embodied Learner

Cross-border mobility of students is a core component of the internationalisation of higher education. It has significant economic and academic implications, and is expected to grow considerably during the coming years.... Market forces play an increasing role in matching demand and supply, and many students go abroad through their own channels rather than through government or institutional sponsorship. Partly as a result, student mobility is now viewed less as aid and more as trade. (Li & Bray 2007, pp. 291-292)

If globalisation involves porosity in borders and boundaries, what then are the impacts on the body? In a world where international education is part of a discourse of 'borderless' economic activity, such as trade liberalisation, a great deal is invested in assembling a disembodied form of international education, as reflected in the quote by Li and Bray (2007) above. This disembodiment rests on the assumption of international students and their parents/families as rational and choice-exercising customers. Such notions of market-based agency help to decentre grounded, situated knowledges, and the ethical dimensions of teaching and learning.

In discourses about transnational students, emphasis on 'free flows' of students back and forth across the borders of nation-states neatly coincides with a prevalent notion of the disembodied learner in higher education, as well as in traditional western epistemology. Just as 'free flows' across borders provides a sense of movement devoid of embodiment, privileging the intellect in higher education programmes suggests freedom from the constraints of embodiment. By according greater importance to the intellect, mind and reason are treated as transcending body and world (Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2005). So, too, in traditional western epistemology where knowledge has been associated with the intellect and rationality, while the rational knower is devoid of context and disembodied, as clearly expressed by Descartes: 'I think therefore I am'. In this traditional epistemology, the body merely serves as a container for mind.

Disembodied notions of knowing, although debunked in the research literature (e.g., Bresler, 2004; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2005, 2007; Grosz, 1994; Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1945; Mol, 2002; Young, 1990, 2003), continue to influence teaching and learning in higher education, as well as permeating conceptualisations of international

education. As Merleau-Ponty (1962/1945) demonstrates, coming to know does not occur despite the constraints of body, but through the access that embodiment provides to our world. It is through embodiment that we can have a world at all:

The body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them.... I am conscious of my body *via* the world ... [and] I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1945, p. 82)

Merleau-Ponty locates consciousness and intention not only in cognition but in bodily experiences. Embodiment, then, is a condition for knowing; it makes knowing possible.

Just as he rejects containment of mind within the body, Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion of the self-contained and autonomous body: 'We must therefore avoid saying that our body is *in* space, or *in* time. It *inhabits* space and time' (p. 139). As soon as we are born (or, perhaps, even beforehand) we begin to be socialised into everyday practices that make it possible to navigate our world. These practices extend beyond the individual in space and time, so the body is simultaneously individual and social:

As my living present opens upon a past which I nevertheless am no longer living through, and on a future which I do not yet live, and perhaps never shall, it can also open on to temporalities outside my living experience and acquire a social horizon, with the result that my world is expanded to the dimensions of that collective history which my private existence takes up and carries forward. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1945, p. 433)

The body to which Merleau-Ponty refers is not limited to the physical body as a set of interconnected organs, but is the body as *lived*. Entwinement and engagement with the world through the lived body means body-world relations are permeated by gender, race, colour and sexuality and, by extension, power relations (see also Grosz, 1994; Young, 1990, 2003).

Grosz acknowledges that Merleau-Ponty overlooks relations of power, but points to Foucault's work in highlighting the relation between materiality and power:

In Foucault, the body is the object, target, and instrument of power, the field of greatest investment for power's operations, a stake in the struggle for power's control over a materiality that is dangerous to it, precisely because it is unpredictable and able to be used in potentially infinite ways, according to infinitely variable cultural dictates... The body is that materiality, almost a medium, on which power operates and through which it functions. (1994, p. 146)

If we overlook embodiment, then, we avoid addressing relations of power and the ethics of responsibility. This manifests when intellect and rationality are privileged over embodiment. The body's spatiality and temporality – its history and geography – are similarly ignored. This is the case when international education is presented as a 'rational choice' for improving one's intellect.

The discourse of 'rational choice' to study abroad and select a study destination overlooks the power and control that is exercised in providing or denying access to students with particular histories and geographies. It overlooks the neoliberal politics that animate global mobilities, re-inserting stratifications based on race and class into, and through, the 'neutral' global education market. For example, it ignores how flows are generated by racialised governmentalities in national spaces that deny educational access to minorities; or the tendencies of nation-states to categorise what is ostensibly described as markets – but involves people – along a 'spectrum of desirability' (Mountz, 2003, p. 624) according to their countries of origin, ethnicities, and religious and linguistic backgrounds. Put simply, a discourse of 'rational choice' overlooks the material, historical and social conditions of those doing the 'choosing'; it ignores the largely unidirectional flows of international students from the 'rest' to the 'west'.

By contrast, an emphasis on bodies ahead of disembodied flows of student numbers enables us to critically interrogate how educational value is being assembled in contemporary times: whose curricula are privileged, whose languages are desired, who earns the revenue, who pays and which geographies are valued centres of learning. Put another way, which measures of social and cultural capital are privileged (see, for example, Li & Bray, 2007; Waters, 2006). Embodiment raises questions relating to the situatedness of the knowledge that is marketed, produced and disseminated as 'an international education'. It thus gives rise to questions about what students learn, how relevant it is to the countries from which they come, how this

learning occurs, who international students have the opportunity to interact with during their studies, and in what sense their education provides and promotes cosmopolitanism, which it claims to do, as we discuss below. We are not alone in calling into question the transformative possibilities of international education in its current form:

the internationalisation of higher education may be seen as ‘counter–ethical to the extent that it is irremediably cultural hegemonic regardless of the efforts that are made to be sensitive and responsive to the cultures into which it is marketed’.
(Bagnall cited by Papastephanou, 2005, p. 544; see also Yang, 2005)

In line with social and cultural hegemony and in sharp contrast to discourses of free flows and rational choice, embodiment has direct implications for the ‘fit’ of some bodies as they move across borders. A Chinese Singaporean who had previously studied in the United States reflected on his embodied experiences, as follows:

One thing that I do remember being exposed to in the United States is ... I fully understood what it meant to be a member of a minority group. That was something I had not experienced before. Because in Singapore I never had to. It’s strange because ... when I was living in Hong Kong, I didn’t feel like that. I knew I was not a local but nobody knew that you weren’t a local.

By attending to embodiment – to such markers as physical appearances, skin colour and accents – we are confronted by the pervasiveness of insider–outsider binaries. We stand a better chance, then, of challenging the power of binary framings – mind/body, personal/political, rational/emotional, self/other, objective/subjective, insider/outsider – and all the inequities they elicit if we engage with issues of embodiment. The ‘fit’ of bodies, as experienced by students and perceived by education providers, can have implications for what students gain from the international education experience. Being aware of the emotions, vulnerabilities and stresses emerging from re-location and adjustment to different social settings, foods and climate creates the conditions for empathy and engagement with international students. Bodily boundaries are not ‘natural’; they are produced and performed through power-inflected relations. Equally they can be destabilised and transgressed.

In sum, when student flows or revenue are taken as the unit of analysis, addressing the embodiment of learners is easily avoided. While statistics on revenue generated or ‘free flows’ of students are useful for understanding the scale and directions of movement across borders, they do not illuminate reasons for this movement, or the lived experiences of students, and the outcomes of transnationality for individuals, for families, for education institutions and for sending and receiving countries (see, for example, Healey, 2008; Huang & Yeoh, 2005; Yeoh, Huang & Lam, 2005; Waters, 2005, 2006). Analysis of this kind is important as international students live and study in a diverse range of circumstances that impact upon and circumscribe the experience of study and of the transnational encounter.

Effects of Disembodiment Discourses On Teaching and Learning

Not only do we challenge the notion of ‘free flows’ of students through ‘rational choice’ on the basis that it overlooks the embodied experiences of the students concerned, but such conceptualisations also have material effects on the teaching and learning encounter. In the first instance, in the case of Australian universities, budgets are disproportionately skewed against teaching and learning in favour of activities aimed at maintaining flows of students, such as marketing and recruitment. In a study of the distribution of international student revenue within Australian universities, Marginson and Eijkman (2007) found that academic units within universities – the schools and departments involved in teaching and supervising onshore students – could receive as little as 40% of an international student’s fees. Revenues from these fees were more likely to be used for recruitment and capital works programmes, ahead of building academic and research capacity. Marginson and Eijkman concluded that ‘commercial imperatives across the higher education sector tend to dumb down the potential for advanced educational development as a whole’ (p. 47).

Second, in stark contrast with discourses of international education promoted by nation-states and universities, some international students (often from ‘Asian’ countries) have traditionally been regarded as deficient in important ways that relate to their learning (see Ballard & Clancy, 1997). For instance, the ‘fit’ of their learning styles, capacity for critical thinking, and preparedness to participate in class discussions and group projects has been questioned. As international education has

become more important for reasons of trade, international relations and the economic survival of universities, deficit discourses are less explicit than previously, but are still evident in contemporary education literature and in the everyday perceptions within university campuses. (See Doherty & Singh, 2005; Marton, Dall’Alba & Tse, 1996; Renshaw & Volet, 1995; Volet & Renshaw, 1996; Watkins, Regmi & Astilla, 1991 for a critique of these discourses.) Deficit discourses, we suggest, are a useful rationalising instrument to shift responsibility for ethnocentrism, including a reluctance to cater for students with diverse experience and lack of preparation for addressing the challenges of teaching international students (see Dunn & Wallace, 2006).

Ninnes and Hellstén (2005, pp. 3-4) argue that ‘the internationalisation of higher education is currently experiencing a moment of exhaustion brought on by increasing workload demands and seemingly insoluble pedagogic and ethical dilemmas’. This is occurring in a context of discourses about the need to internationalise curricula to prepare students for operating in a more fluid, globalised context (e.g., Rizvi & Walsh, 1998; Tsolidis, 2002). However, given that such curricula and their associated pedagogies are culturally, politically and socially situated, the potential to extrapolate internationalisation from existing institutions could potentially lead to a kind of ‘western parochialism dressed up as universalism’ (see Nederveen Pieterse, 2006).

We suggest that conventional discourses about pedagogy and curricula for a globalised world have taken up a minimalist cosmopolitan imaginary based on the notion of a citizen of the world who moves freely across borders.

More recently, scholars have recognised the importance of embodied cosmopolitan imaginaries from below, or actually existing cosmopolitanisms, in promoting openness to others and valuing difference. As Molz (2006) points out, ‘the cosmopolitan characteristics of flexibility, adaptability and openness to difference and risk are not just cultural dispositions, but rather embodied performances of fitness and fitting in’ (p. 17). Further, ‘cosmopolitanisms are differentiated and differently embodied. Fitting in involves complex negotiations between bodies, places and mobilities’ (p. 17). Given that cosmopolitanism is achieved through embodied practices, there are implications for pedagogy and curriculum that merit investigation. In particular, an emphasis on the intellect at the expense of learning embodied practices and associated dispositions falls short of promoting emancipatory and ethical expressions of cosmopolitanism.

Embodying the Nation-State

Having discussed the prevalence of disembodied notions of the learner in institutional practices, we now turn to the national identities that are being crafted by education exporting nations in their attempts to secure competitive advantage in the global education market. We show that in sustaining demand for educational services, and finding and building new markets for education exports, particular identities are being constructed for education exporting countries. These identities work to dilute their complex histories of imperialism, and re-moralize empire by enacting an imagined liberal humanitarian present. The global education market is, then, a far cry from a neutral supply-and-demand entity.

Over the last decade, international education has been re-conceptualised in policy discourses as a knowledge and service based industry where previously a discourse of educational aid and modernisation prevailed, evident in schemes such as the Fulbright Programme and Colombo Plan. This significant discursive move has been facilitated by a raft of neoliberalising policies of economic reform aimed at steering institutions towards marketisation. Higher education's commodification has also been fuelled by growing anxieties on the parts of middle classes in various parts of the world on securing educational advantage for their children (Waters, 2005). These factors and a rapidly changing consumption landscape characterised by economic liberalisation has facilitated the development of an international education industry.

The site of education branding brings together the spheres of culture and economy and provides a context for researchers to investigate the ways in which national identities are crafted to further the economic agendas of individual countries. Branding narratives and images also enable us to investigate whether the power of binary framings around the self and the other are being unsettled in these 'globalising' times. Our analysis of these promotional narratives reveals an implicit endorsement of (neo)liberal governance, making the prospects for an emancipatory cosmopolitanism appear remote.

As with the broader advertising sphere, educational branding practices work by building up particular sets of attributes as a means of establishing a brand loyalty for an education product or service (see Maguire, Ball & MacCrae, 1999, 2001). In the international education field, branding embraces individual universities, the places in which they are located, and the markets they are expected to maintain and attract. It is

now commonplace to brand entire countries with a personality (country branding), ostensibly to construct them as magnets for tourists and students, for capital investment, and as attractive sites for high value human capital to live and work (see Amin & Thrift, 2004; Sidhu, 2006).

We now examine how the three main education exporting nations, the UK, US and Australia, brand themselves; how national self-images foster particular kinds of geopolitical identities. We read this against the kinds of subjectivities that are implied of the international student other and against claims to cosmopolitanism. We begin with the UK's branding strategies. Our analysis is based on both web- and print-based promotional materials produced by the key marketing agency in the UK, the British Council, from 2000 to 2007. We supplemented these data with interviews conducted with British Council staff based in the UK who have responsibilities for marketing. Insights were also included from interviews conducted with marketing managers from two British universities – one a Russell Group institution well known for attracting international students, and the other a post-92 university also noted for its popularity with international students.

'Cool Britannia': Education UK

The Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) was a five year policy platform intended to increase the UK's market share in the international education industry by 25% by 2005. This PMI set the context for the first major British Council education marketing campaign in 2000 (British Council, 2007a). Following extensive market research by the public relations firm Ericksen McCann, the British Council established a brand, *Education UK*, and a marketing slogan, 'the best you can be'. The subjectivity anticipated for the international student would centre around achievement-centredness and academic rigour. Marketing narratives were subtly reconfigured to soften any hard edge commercialism, calling on altruism, childhood wish fulfilment and nostalgia to appeal to the prospective student-customer.

Education UK's branding trajectory for the period 2000-2006 largely focused on 'reinforcing and developing positive perceptions and challenging negative perceptions' (British Council, 2007a). The first branding exercise in 2000 used Oxford and Cambridge as guiding icons of British educational excellence, creating an image of an intellectually serious, 'quality' study destination. Marketing messages were also directed at subverting existing stereotypes of 'a cold country [i]n terms of

its weather and its people'. The new UK was to 'be responsive, welcoming and alive with possibility' (interview with British Council Manager).

Marketing messages also focused on diluting the negative stereotypes of the United Kingdom as a former imperial power and a society stratified by class and race, like so many others. Thus, the British Council's 2007 web-based promotional materials, has the sub-heading, **British Class System** in bold typeface, with an accompanying declaration that 'Over 99% of UK primary and secondary schools are now connected to the Internet, making the UK classroom the most connected in Europe' (British Council Sri Lanka, 2007). This pronouncement and the impression it seeks to create is in tension with the UK's position at the top of the league of developed countries for child poverty and social exclusion as noted by a study of child health by Unicef (2007) 'Child Well-Being in Rich Countries' (see also Spencer, 2008).

A similar discursive technique sees the reification of the multicultural imaginary. *Education UK's* promotional materials from 2000-2005 carried statements of the following kind, which place the agency for multicultural harmony onto individuals and 'other' communities, ahead of British institutions: '[The UK's] much talked about class system is giving way to true multiculturalism as its diverse ethnic communities find their voice in British society'. A history of class and race-based stratification was thus quietly obscured. A new UK, vibrant, vital, alive to new ideas and open to new influences was heralded as: 'country under change'. The desirability of the UK as a place of residence because of its 'multicultural' and 'cosmopolitan' character was also highlighted:

Many thousands of families from around the world have made the UK their home, creating a richly diverse, open-minded, multicultural society. This cosmopolitan atmosphere makes it easy to settle down as an international student (Education UK Malaysia, 2005).

The multicultural imaginary of the nation-state is less salient in phase two of the PMI, which commenced in 2006. Both the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 versions of *Guide to Living and Working in the UK* carry no references to multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism except in passing, to describe the shopping opportunities offered by the Victorian Quarter of Leeds (British Council, 2007b, p. 177). We suggest that the discursive absence of the multicultural imaginary in British marketing materials

resonates with broader moves to discipline the ideal of a multicultural democracy and to introduce a more assimilationist model of social cohesion (see Biccum, 2007; Cheong et al, 2007).

Although the self-image of a welcoming country is repeatedly reinforced in marketing texts, the provision of fairly detailed information to students and institutions on the protocols of entry into the UK is suggestive of a subtext. Thus, the 2006/2007 *Welcome Address* by the Director-General of the British Council hints of the barriers that may strain the welcome: ‘The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has given his personal support to an initiative for international students to ensure that coming to study in the UK is a straightforward and trouble free experience’ (British Council, 2007b).

An economy of symbols and brands is inherently unstable, so that players in the transnational education market cannot rest on their laurels but must seek to constantly remodel and reengineer their national images and identities. In 2000, the British Council commissioned the Gilligan Report, *Realising our Potential*, which recommended a more professional approach to marketing. In 2003 another report, *Positioning for Success*, was circulated in response to concerns about losing market share. It was also framed by a discourse of crisis and threat.

Replete with statistics of projected demand, demographic trends, competitor strategies, and geo-demographic search instruments, *Positioning for Success* outlines the techniques intended to make visible other markets, and present and future temporalities (pp. 23-28). These informational devices and technologies record, analyse, and construct market intelligence to pinpoint with increasing precision where and who the customer is in the present and the future. Once again, the international student is conferred with a disembodied subjectivity, regarded as a unit of consumption and investment, to be recruited in the first instance, and thereafter to be nurtured through relationship marketing for further improvement under the mantle of ‘lifelong learning’ (British Council, 2003).

In response to concerns that ‘the uniqueness of the UK’s education is being eaten away at the edges by other countries’, Phase Two of the Prime Minister’s Initiative led to another revamping of the *Education UK* brand. The quality image so assiduously promoted in the past is now considered to be a ‘double edged sword’. While it has attracted an intellectually serious student population, it is also seen as discouraging other prospective students who might lack the strong academic

credentials, leading to a loss of market share (British Council, 2007). Broadening the appeal to a more varied market has seen the incorporation of the ‘broad elements of a global culture’ into promotional and marketing materials, as well as a more extensive subjectivity for the international student. The targeted student isn’t hemmed in by a singular personality, is an individual and is able to ‘think outside of the box’ (British Council, 2007). At the same time, there is room for the elite intellectual world-class subject from ‘the best you can be’ era of marketing. The new marketing slogan, ‘Innovative. Individual. Inspirational’, is anticipated to portray this global appeal and stitch up the competition, at least until the next big marketing campaign.

In the next section, we examine the education branding of the United States, the most popular destination for international students. Although the US lacks a coherent national strategy to marketing international education like the UK, Australia or New Zealand, the Institute of International Education (IIE) comes closest to being a national marketing body. The analysis below is based on a study of the IIE’s Annual Reports, and web-based promotional materials for the period extending from 2000 to 2007. Insights from field reports of exchange programmes and fellowships are also incorporated.

‘Opening Minds to the World’: The Institute of International Education (USA)

The IIE describes itself as an independent, non-profit organization that is funded by government and non-government agencies. The IIE’s sponsors include the US State Department and USAID, various private foundations, and public and private sector agencies. It also manages scholarship programmes for several national governments. It has a broad and impressive mission which includes: ‘promoting closer educational relations between the people of the United States and other countries’; ‘rescuing scholars and promoting academic freedom throughout the world’; ‘fostering sustainable development through a range of training programmes’; and ‘partnering with corporations, foundations and governments in finding and developing people able to think and work on a global basis’ (IIE, 2007). Its sponsors reflect the diversity of American interests in international education, ranging from the right-wing Freeman Foundation, to the more liberal MacArthur Foundation. The IIE also conducts the annual ‘Open Doors’ census of international students enrolled in US universities, possibly the most comprehensive and authoritative guide to the distribution of

international students in the US. What are the forms of embodiment and subjectivity emerging from the IIE's public discourse?

A perusal of its annual reports, field reports and promotional narratives suggests the IIE promotes and constructs a particular discourse of internationalism that side-steps the structural and systemic problems and limitations associated with market-oriented international education. A humanitarian and visionary subjectivity is assembled for the American nation-state, conveyed in the composite chapters of its annual reports: *Educating Global Citizens*, *Advancing Social Justice*, *Building Human Capacity*, *Creating Mutual Understanding*, and *Rescuing Threatened Scholars* (IIE, 2007). However, a closer analysis of its numerous programmatic rationalities suggests a concern with developing a global citizenry that will transfer American acquired capabilities to 'marginal' spaces to help them 'develop' in ways that are consistent with American values and interests. Thus, the IIE identifies 'helping communities move towards positive change and democratic change' as a pillar of advancing social justice, but limits this to 'offering education and leadership training' to enable individuals to return to their country to make changes. Similarly, a broader objective – *Educating Global Citizens* – is translated into programmes aimed to develop 'globally minded scientists, science leaders and engineers [who have] the cross cultural experiences and professional experiences required to excel in the multinational/multicultural laboratories and boardrooms of the 21st century'. We suggest that the rationality of the numerous programmes designed to develop globally minded scientists and engineers, for example, the \$20 million Whittaker International Fellows and Scholars Programme and the Global Engineering Education Exchange (E3), are discursively linked to the goal of 'Increasing Scientific Competitiveness'. A discourse of the unlimited possibilities of market- and technology-inspired benefits runs through these narratives, which are further bolstered by testimonies of its participants:

The scientific discoveries, the technological developments, the research labs that we read about in tech magazines are a reality in Bell Labs. [I] saw working devices that will change the way we communicate, the way we live. These were the best seven days of my life. (Lucent Global Science Scholar quoted by IIE, 2004, p. 17)

Field reports by international recipients of IIE-managed study tours and fellowships in the Human Capacity Building and Global Education programmes point to the power/knowledges effects of IIE programmes and, more specifically, the regimes of value accorded to managerial and scientific knowledges. Field reports identify the transmissions of very specific kinds of knowledges, for example, technological solutions for air and water waste management, and various forms of managerial knowledge, such as financial risk assessment, audit, quality and benchmarking technologies (e.g., ISO standards). The cultural authority of ‘western’ science and management is all too evident and there are no suggestions here that indigenous knowledges from ‘marginal spaces’ might contribute to understandings of natural systems, land management or alternative plant-based pharmacologies.

The promotional ethos of IIE, then, can be said to rest on ‘Empowering for and within a capitalist political economy’. Discourses of individualism, improvement and choice are filtered through the programmes that it manages. References to trade and financial liberalisation, and the various national and transnational policy regimes that control intellectual property are conspicuously absent, even though some of the IIE’s most active sponsors and supporters are noted for their aggressive approach to regulating intellectual property and, by extension, restricting the free flow of knowledge. (See May, 2004 on how USAID has used aid budgets for training NGOs in managing intellectual property, rather than for humanitarian development.) Attention is thereby deftly displaced from the inequitable structures and systems that might be associated with the global marketplace of education and technology. To conclude, IIE imagines and constructs an embodied subjectivity for the US that has resonances with a long-standing discourse of American liberal internationalism.

We also briefly comment on the *Scholars Rescue Fund* (SRF) programme. The Fund ‘formalises an unwavering commitment to academic freedom’ and is presented as a cornerstone of the IIE’s mission for the last 85 years. The catchcry of the SRF is ‘Lives Saved, Voices Saved, Ideas Saved’. Its declared commitment is to ‘preserve the intellectual capital of humanity, that is vital for progress’. The SRF uses images that are hard hitting, and closely approximate the imagery typically associated with human rights organizations such as Amnesty International. Images of barbed wire, cells, walls and prisons produce a dramatic visual archive. The discourse of urgency and danger does not translate into easy access to the programme and details about how people might gain access suggest a convoluted and somewhat bureaucratic

process. Scholars apply for fellowships under the Fund. Once selected, awards are made to host institutions, which match in-full or in-kind contributions. ‘Rescued scholars’ carry out teaching, research and publishing work. Fellowships support temporary stays. If conditions in their home country don’t improve, ‘the scholar may use the fellowship period to identify longer-term opportunities’. A reading of the fine print on the Fund website reveals the relatively modest role of the SRF in upholding academic freedom. For example, since 2002, 353 scholars from 43 countries have been placed at host universities in some 38 countries.

We now turn to the marketing narratives generated by IDP Education Australia, a quasi-government institution funded by Australia’s universities, which serves as the principal education marketing body. We focus on two marketing campaigns, the *Real Australia* and *Excellence Australia* marketing initiatives launched by IDP Australia in 2006/2007 to attract international students. Real Australia was formulated to increase enrolments to regional universities, traditionally less favoured by those students. We focus on the images of the nation-state that are being constituted.

‘Experience the Real Australia’

Clean air, open spaces, kangaroos outside your window, star-spotted midnight skies. [Let] IDP introduce you to the ‘Real Australia’ universities and their campuses. These campuses are situated outside Australia’s capital cities. [They] provide total immersion, not just in your studies, but also in the Australian culture (IDP, 2007a).

The *Real Australia* campaign pictures Australia as an unspoiled natural paradise, where native fauna flourish. ‘State-of-the art campuses’ and ‘star-spotted skies’ assemble the perfect synergy of nature, culture, and learning. Two branding thematics are characteristic of these ‘real Australian’ universities: as sites of tourism and as ‘gateways’ for migration. In keeping with Australian government policy to ‘support regional development and to supply the skill needs of regional employers’, the ‘right’ prospective migrants – young (under 45 years), English speaking, and with expertise, experience and skills in targeted areas – are accorded preferential status (IDP, 2007). IDP’s promotional narrative draws attention to this policy: ‘As an added bonus, international students at some of these campuses may be able to gain additional visa points towards migration’ (IDPa, 2007).

The project of participating in the competitive global education market creates opportunities and new identities for regional universities and localities in which they are situated. Once given little recognition and regard, the issue of cultural diversity has now assumed higher status, and the (imagined) cultural homogeneity that defined rural society is now being reconfigured. Local governments and the leadership of regional universities are mindful of the need to build an image of rural society as tolerant, warm, friendly and accepting of difference. Allied to this, a series of community engagement projects have been undertaken to dilute resistance to the changing ethnoscape in rural and regional Australia.

The *Real Australia* branding campaign should be read within this context of a broader development strategy by the Australian government to reinvigorate the economies of 'regional' or country Australia. Reconstructing rural spaces has become a major policy endeavour. In keeping with advanced liberal governance, government policies have focused on 'governing through community' (Rose, 2000) ahead of direct intervention by government. The effects of this style of governance is that regional communities and institutions based in rural Australia, including regional universities, are now expected to play a greater role in social and economic restructuring (see Herbert-Cheshire & Higgins, 2004). Universities in *Real Australia*, then, are expected to manage risk and position themselves in the global, national and local circuits of opportunity and competition. To this end, they engage in a delicate re-scaling of risk and opportunity management, searching for different strategic options and development pathways. These include ICT-based courses, twinning and franchise opportunities with public and private higher education providers in Southeast Asia, and offshore teaching. Regional universities deploy and leverage Australia's reputation as a 'western' country and, by extension, provider of 'quality' English speaking credentials to secure their economic futures (Marginson, 2006). While their positioning in a localised economic geography brings certain risks – for example, drought, urban flight of young people, and poor commodity prices – so, too, does their exposure to competitive global education markets. Fluctuating exchange rates, economic downturns in source countries and new sites of competition from emerging education hubs create a different and equally challenging set of circumstances.

Although a successful exporter of education, Australia's attraction as an education destination rests on its lower cost and the comparatively safer environment it offers compared to the UK and the US, both of which are preferred education destinations of

the intellectually serious student. Re-branding Australian education as a serious and high quality product is thus paramount.

Constructing Excellence

IDP's promotional blurb describes *Excellence Australia* as a campaign to highlight outstanding education and research expertise in Australian universities and schools. Its website identifies and clusters several areas of excellence under headings such as: Health Digest, Nursing Digest, Teaching Digest, and Environmental Digest.

The Health Digest commences with a hard-hitting statement that 'human health is an international priority, literally a matter of life and death'. It then goes on to showcase Australian achievements in health sciences research using a slew of statistics aimed at creating the impression of a well-funded health research sector, despite broad concerns about declining quality of clinical services, poor funding for research, low morale and excessive bureaucracy. There is the smallest of hints of the acutely different health agendas facing the wealthy countries where 'abundance has created new health concerns [and] the need to find solutions for lifestyle issues eg obesity, diabetes and heart diseases', and those spaces where the priorities are to 'lift basic health standards' (IDPb, 2007).

The worldwide nursing crisis, for example, is described and constituted in a narrative of individual opportunity, a veritable win-win scenario for all stakeholders:

[Nurses] are essential to the healthcare system globally, and recruiting nurses to foreign shores benefits both the nurse and the community they will serve. For individual nurses, the most effective ways to increase your mobility and competitiveness is with international qualifications and/or experience, English language skills and professional upgrades.

The visibilities constructed through these statements offer useful indicators of what is left unsaid, and the implications of these discursive silences. For example, no mention is made of ethical issues that might frame the mobilities of nursing professionals from the developing world to the developed world. The practice of recruiting nurses from abroad, a policy of the US, UK and increasingly Australia, is controversial. While larger developing countries (for example, India) have been able to weather the flight of trained health workers, smaller countries, particularly those in Africa, have

witnessed a critical deterioration of health services. The aggressive recruitment of health workers from developing countries by developed countries such as the US and the UK, led to this observation from the British medical journal, *Lancet*: ‘to poach and rely on highly skilled foreign workers from poor countries in the public sector is akin the crime of theft’ (*Lancet* quoted by Laurence, 2005). The US-based Physicians for Human Rights have voiced a similar tenor of concern about the scarcity of health workers in regard to global humanitarian efforts to combat Aids and malaria (Dugger, 2005, 2006; Laurence, 2005). Nursing shortages in parts of Africa, for example, are noted to have severely compromised ante-natal and post-natal care, leading to higher incidences of death and disability in newborns (Laurence, 2005).

Marketing practices that are focused on finding and exploiting new niche markets so as to ensure a smooth flow of export income cannot be concerned with the messy ambiguities of professional mobilities. It is not surprising, then, that IDP’s marketing narratives construct a fleet-footed nursing professional, one who utilizes education to establish herself as a competitive and mobile subject in a global labour market.

We conclude that IDP’s practices of branding international education, then, are premised on a particular notion of personhood for the professional subject. Mobile, flexible, competitive, self-interested and concerned with responding to state-driven business and industry friendly agendas, this is a discourse that has neoliberalizing resonances consistent with an instrumental form of cosmopolitanism.

Concluding Comments

In this paper we have acknowledged the substantial contributions and benefits of international education for nation-states and international students. Against this background, we have attempted to disrupt recent mainstream narratives through scrutinising and interrogating representational genres used in the international education industry to construct the subjectivities of nation-states and of international students. From marketing and academic discourses, we identified the constitution and anchoring of a specific subjectivity for the international student: the choice-exercising economic subject, who is self-contained, self-directing and capable of self-knowledge. We argued that this disembodied, rational, choice-exercising subject occupies a convenient place in the commercialised global education market. Disembodiment

functions as a political technology, foregrounding flows and shifting attention away from the embodied experiences of students and their need for situated knowledges. The pervasiveness of this subjectivity effectively frees universities from the moral imperative of engaging international students in educative processes, which might contribute to ‘emancipatory cosmopolitanism’ for global civic responsibility.

We also examined the embodied nation-state presented in Australian, British and American promotional discourses. A close reading of marketing discourses by the US-based Institute of International Education reveals an ambition to educate global citizens with the attributes and aptitudes for neoliberal globalisation. Australia has less grandiose ambitions: it is concerned with crafting itself as a quality provider of professional credentials with currency in the global labour market with the added bonus of being a migration destination. The UK, on the other hand, seeks to resurrect an imagined imperial image as a civilizational centre committed to fair play, instead of engaging with its more complex history, and past and present social stratifications. British educational ‘excellence’ is also discursively re-packaged in ways that enable a broader and more contemporary appeal to multiple markets and consumers. Through their practices of branding, education exporting nations seek to entrench corporate cosmopolitanism and institutionalise an attitude towards education by student and educator that creates the conditions for neoliberal globalisation.

While neoliberal discourses that construct and perpetuate disembodied subjectivities are themselves open to challenge and re-negotiation, a starting point to imagining other possibilities for international education is to recognise the nuanced and finely textured ways in which marketing mentalities are promoted. A higher education agenda governed by market mentalities is likely to create the conditions for the development of epistemic cultures and forms of conduct that offer little by way of ideas, knowledges and ethics to deal with the pressing problems of our times: the casino capitalism of finance markets, global poverty, ecological challenges and the rising tide of cultural nationalism.

How might international education contribute to an emancipatory cosmopolitanism that differs radically from an instrumental form of cosmopolitanism through mindfulness of human dignity and globally relevant ethics? A starting point may be to recognise the limitations of cultural exchanges and pedagogical encounters such as those that characterise contemporary forms of international education. The global imagination celebrated by supporters of marketised forms of international education is

more often than not an expression of corporate cosmopolitanism. In its place, we need an embodied, grounded cosmopolitanism that is attuned to addressing the challenges of our contemporary world, while drawing on the resources of multiple cultures to develop an ethics of care and hospitality.

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