

Global Responsibility and Institutional Mandate: Opportunity for Innovation

The world is not a fair and just place naturally. It is up to us, the people in it, to make it so. Our efforts are needed both at home and abroad. In today's world, peace, security and welfare of people are indivisible.

- **Tarja Halonen**, President of Finland, 2000 – 2012

Education inhabits the tension between global responsibility and institutional mandate, between the local and the international, between the neighbourhood and the planet, between the ideal and the ability to deliver even the basic, between the trustee and the poet.

And so it is also, perhaps even more pronounced, for us in International Education, where by nature and definition we must now navigate through the dynamics of the two camps and between the two solitudes.

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle.

- (ascribed to) **Plato**

The idea that an educated public leads to a prosperous and stable society dates back at least to Confucius some 2500 years ago. It is the cornerstone of an informed citizenry and an essential element for the full respect of human rights and security. We continue to respect the dignity of our mission, the nostalgic sense of the universality of scholarship and research, of teaching and learning for progress and development, communal good and personal growth. For peace, security, access, health, equality, advancement. We pursue with evangelical zeal opportunities for experiential learning and global citizenry for our students and colleagues. We embrace difference and encourage tolerance to an extent unimaginable even one generation ago. We comb the world providing opportunity for the best and the brightest and increasingly even the above average.

But, here at the computer, realities must reconcile with aspirations. We work for those who sign our pay cheques. Our administrations grapple with the same realities as our governments. Globalization has rendered tax dollars harder to find and easier to spend on the health of aging populations and the insatiable demands of growth and infrastructure. Universal access to subsidized social expenditure becomes harder to justify when users can and will pay. Our local communities must now play by the same rules as the global markets we engage in.

Globalization is no longer merely about moving goods and services across borders, or the mercantile interactions between nation states. It is influencing deteriorating state service, the

resultant diminution of state suasion and control, and ultimately the slow erosion of nation states themselves coincident with the advent of fundamentalism and tribalism. It is about increasingly porous borders, about instantaneous transactions of information and capital for every shade of purpose, about technology run amok contributing to the largest global youth unemployment numbers ever seen, about the most populous and diverse flows of refugees experienced in our lifetimes. It is about the roughhouse interplay between all the various players in a cluttered world.

In International Education, as the academic response to globalization, our challenge is to make globalisation work for as many as possible in a responsible way, not just the most affluent 15% of emerging economies to whom we market our education. How then?

As is so often the case, a conference theme can provide questions and prompts but maybe opportunity for only a few answers; perhaps the best we can hope for is an affirmation or correction of direction.

It is a function of gatherings such as the Summer Seminar to examine an often-unexamined sector, to pose and then grapple with sometimes difficult questions. Let us identify the daily and the long-term dynamics between our responsibilities as educators – where we assume that knowledge has no master and knows no boundaries – and the often mundane restrictions and realities imposed by our mandates.

Best,

The BCCIE Team