

...and the market created the student to its image and likening.

Neo-liberal governmentality and its effects on pedagogy and course design in higher education in Ireland.

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The article looks at two important documents in the context of education policy in Ireland: the Higher Education Authority's Strategic Plan 2008-2010 and the Government's report: Building Ireland' Smart Economy. It demonstrates how the entrepreneurial student is fabricated out of particular truths told about the present and the obligations that flow from this. Utilising governmentality theory it examines the reconstruction of students' subjectivities by focusing on three dimension of government: rationalities, technologies and ethics. It concludes that higher education is being framed in economic terms and other important aspects, like criticality and social responsibility are being undermined in our race towards economic progress.

Keywords: higher education; governmentality; student subjectivity

Introduction

This article argues that the current smart-economy discourses driving higher education (HE) policy involves intellectual technologies (Rose 1989) for the production of student subjectivities required in a neo-liberal context. Using a governmentality framework (Gordon 1991), it locates the conditions of possibility for the student within dominant policy articulations of the global knowledge economy and emerging rationalities of risk and uncertainty. The analysis is focused on two documents; the HEA's (2008) *Strategic Plan 2008-2010* and The Government's

report (2008) *Building Ireland's Smart Economy, A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* to show how the entrepreneurial self is fabricated out of particular truths told about the present and the obligations of the student-citizen that flow from this. The paper examines how the State is encouraging certain pedagogical practices and course content to create new education figures such as the entrepreneurial student. These subjectivities are essential to the development of the smart economy, which seeks to achieve strong relationships between government, HE and businesses in Ireland.

The emergence of this modern governmentality can be identified by a particular regime of government that takes as its object “the population and is coincident with the emergence of political economy” (Dean 1999: 19). Government involves the health, welfare, prosperity and happiness of the population. To achieve this, the State has devised ways to guide and shape the self-governing capacities of individuals (Hay & Kapitzke 2009). According to Dean (1999) to govern properly and to ensure the happiness and prosperity of the population, it is necessary to govern through a particular register, that of the economy.

Nowadays, due to the financial crises being experienced around the world, governments are keen to emphasize the role third level education can play in helping countries overcome this crisis. In Ireland, HE institutions have come to be seen as part of the answer to economic recovery by producing workers with the knowledge and skills necessary for a smart economy. The knowledge-based economy is presented as the way out of this recession, creating a competitive advantage for those countries that can achieve it.

Thus, policy documents in recent years have sought to improve productivity by urging people to be more innovative, enterprising and entrepreneurial. As Peters

(2005) has highlighted there is in HE a promotion of the entrepreneurial self, the citizen-consumer model, where individuals calculate the risks and invest in themselves at critical points of their life cycle.

A Neo-liberal Governmentality

Neo-liberalism is a theory of political economic practice. It proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey 2005). According to Brown (2003) neo-liberalism defines individuals as rational and calculating whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for self-care – the ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions.

Neo-liberalism carries a conception of society that, when deployed as a form of governmentality (Gordon 1991; Dean 1999) affects the citizen-subject and disseminates market values to all institutions and social actions. By governmentality, Foucault signals the emergence of distinctive types of rule, which include modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, that are destined to affect upon the possibilities of the action of other people (Gordon 1991). Peters (2005) defines neo-liberalism as a risk-management regime, where the trend has been toward creating a uniform structure of expert knowledges that is based on the calculating sciences of actuarialism and accountancy. A way to manage risk under neo-liberalism is by making all actions of institutions and citizens accountable.

An analysis on governmentality should look at the relationships and interconnections between the actions of authorities at the macro political level and self-governing acts at an individual level (Gordon 1991, 3). Drawing from Hay and

Kapitzke (2009) analysis on governmentality I will be looking at the reconstruction of students' subjectivities by focusing on three dimensions of government: rationalities, technologies and ethics.

Rationalities of government

Rationality has been defined as any form of thinking which strives to be relatively clear, systematic and explicit about aspects of external or internal existence about how things are or how they ought to be (Dean 1999, 11). An important aspect of governing rationalities is that they render the present in ways that facilitate governmental intervention or programming (Hay and Kapitzke 2009). It concerns the emergence of problems in relation to particular macro forces or within the operations of particular practices (Rose, 1989). The entrepreneurial student has emerged in the context of an historic transformation in Ireland. This transformation has entailed deployment of discourses of uncertainty (Hay and Kapitzke 2009) adopted as a means of managing Ireland's transition to a globalised-knowledge economy. The problematisations described in government's discourses are related to Ireland's position and competitiveness in the global economy. It proposes strong links between HE and corporations (or commercialisation). It also emphasises that it is the individual's responsibility to be productive by investing on his own enterprise through education.

The key objective of Ireland's Smart Economic Growth framework is to make Ireland the innovation and commercialisation capital of Europe – a country that combines the features of an attractive home for innovative multinationals while also being an incubation environment for the best entrepreneurs from Europe and further afield.

One of the significant factors behind Ireland's economic success is the country's highly valuable human capital base, that is to say, its young, well-educated and talented population and the activities within its third and fourth-level sectors. As the economy matures, it is necessary to emphasise value added and the importance of productivity per person. (Building Ireland's Smart Economy 2008, 59)

Technologies of government

A neo-liberal governmentality has made it possible for human beings to conceive themselves, speak about themselves, judge themselves and conduct themselves in new ways. As Rose (1989) has discussed producing positive knowledges, plausible truth claims (e.g. innovation and commercialisation are the answers to Ireland's economic woes) and apparently dispassionate expertise (e.g. valuable human capital equals being well educated and talented), certain governmentalities have made it possible to govern subjects within these practices and apparatuses in ways that appear to be based, not upon arbitrary authority, but upon the real nature of humans and psychological subjects (e.g. people are naturally entrepreneurial, creative, innovative and productive).

Technologies of government refer to the heterogeneous practical mechanisms and techniques by which connections are made between the aspirations of governing authorities and the self-formative capacities of persons. Rose (1989) describes these practical aspects of governing as technological, in that they attempt to maximise certain capacities and dispositions of individuals (e.g. being productive, entrepreneurial, innovative) while constraining or negating others (e.g. not investing on the enterprise of the self, being under-skilled or uneducated) in relation to authoritative ways of knowing. These dispositions include medical, legal, economic,

pedagogical and administrative forms of understanding the self and others (Rose 1992). In this way, individuals are guided to exercise their freedom through such notions as responsibility, innovation, creativity, enterprise, and so on.

Higher education is central to Ireland's development and the student is the central focus of all higher education activities. Quality teaching and learning, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, are at the core of the mission of higher education institutions, which form a sector which should also be internationally recognised for:

- a vibrant research and innovation culture that is quality driven, addresses a broad spectrum of disciplines and is closely connected to teaching and learning;
- [...] the provision of the innovative and creative graduates equipped with the skills needed to perform successfully in a competitive environment and contribute to fostering an enterprise culture and the nurturing of entrepreneurs
- flexibility in provision, offering multiple opportunities for educational progress through mechanisms such as modularisation, part-time study, distance learning and e-learning thereby bringing reality to the concept of lifelong learning [...] (HEA, Strategic Plan 2008, 12)

Significantly, technologies of governance are not rationally designed mechanisms that derive from governing rationalities in any predetermined way. Rather, they are the result of a complex aggregation of diverse forces (Rose 1992).

Hay and Kapitzke (2009) explain how these technologies are developed from current social and cultural contexts. Authorities borrow concepts from other programs and adapt them for new purposes. The HEA has appropriated concepts like entrepreneurship and innovation from a business context. The Smart Economy is the

most recent version of a succession of salvation discourses used by government to manage the demands of a global knowledge economy (Hay and Kapitzke 2009).

The Smart Economy combines the successful elements of the enterprise economy and the innovation or 'ideas' economy while promoting a high-quality environment, improving energy security and promoting social cohesion. A key feature of this approach is building the innovation or 'ideas' component of the economy through the utilisation of human capital – the knowledge, skills and creativity of people - and its ability and effectiveness in translating ideas into valuable processes, products and services. (Building Ireland's Knowledge Economy 2008, 6)

A neo-liberal governmentality does not crush subjectivity. It actually fabricates subjects capable of bearing the burdens of liberty (Rose 1989). Neo-liberalism celebrates values of autonomy and self-realisation. These values establish and delimit our sense of what it is to be a human being, and what it is to live a life of liberty: indeed contemporary human subjects, at least when they are accorded the status of adults, are obliged to be free (Rose 1989). That is to say, however apparent external and implacable the constraints, obstacles and limitations encountered, each individual must render her life meaningful as if it were the outcome of individual choices made in the furtherance of a biographical project of self-realization (Rose 1989). People need to invest in themselves to make sure that they become valuable human capital. Adults who are under-skilled for a knowledge-based economy should use their freedom in a moral and ethical way by seizing the opportunities offered to them by a flexible and part-time HE system:

Adult participation in higher education in Ireland is very low by international standards. The National Skills Strategy has reiterated this point. It has recommended upskilling 500,000 of the workforce by one level of education over the period to 2020. Such targets can only be achieved through increased opportunities and incentivisation for part-time, higher education participation. (HEA Strategic Plan 2008, 23)

Hacking (1986) argues that human actions become possible and intelligible only in the presence of certain languages of description. What is important then is not so much what language means, but what language does, what it enables human beings to imagine and to do to themselves and to others. Language can be integrated within technologies that make human beings capable of being and doing particular things (Rose 1989). Words like entrepreneurial innovation commercialisation and enterprise culture are key words in the new discourse of HE suggesting that there has been too much emphasis on social and cultural objectives in the past and insufficient emphasis on economic goals in the education system (Peters 2001).

Ethics and government

The rational attempt to shape conduct implies questions of morality (Dean 1999). If morality is understood as the attempt to make oneself accountable for one's own actions, or as a practice in which human beings take their own conduct to be subject to self-regulation, then government is an intensely moral activity. It is moral because policies and practices of government presume to know what constitutes good, virtuous, appropriate, responsible conduct of the individual and collectives (Dean 1999, 11-12). The notion of a self-governing subject is strongly linked to a moral

subject: autonomous and capable of utilising his freedom in a responsible manner by monitoring and regulating his own conduct.

Any theoretical investigation into the creation of certain subjectivities must account for how subjectivity encompasses a moral and ethical dimension (Hay and Kapitzke 2009). Foucault's notion of ethics corresponds to the practical ways that subjects relate to themselves and others through certain truths concerning what is good and bad, esteemed or reviled, desirable or detrimental (Osbourne 1998). These truths enable particular ways of evaluating and acting upon one's self and upon others. The HEA promotes the notion of the enterprising subject as someone who is intrinsically ethical because it is linked to positive values such as freedom, initiative, innovation, productivity, nationalism and responsibility (Hay and Kapitzke 2009; Peters 2005). Peters (2005) believes that neo-liberalism can be seen as an intensification of moral regulating due to its measurable and accountable dimensions. By making conduct measurable and therefore visible the neo-liberal subject is presented as an ethical and moral individual. Another important aspect of this moral dimension is linked to responsabilization and prudentialism.

Responsabilization and Prudentialism

A key aspect of a neo-liberalism is the responsabilization of individuals through the economics of their own well being (Peters 2005). The idea of one's life as the enterprise of oneself implies that there is a sense in which one remains always continuously employed in that one enterprise, and that it is a part of the continuous business of living to make adequate provision for the preservation, reproduction and reconstruction of one's own human capital (Gordon 1991, 44). The ideal of lifelong learning is a clear example of the notion of a never-ending enterprise of increasing

your value as a person. You can never stay still; you have never arrived, in order to become a successful human being you need to engage in this never ending project of self-improvement.

An integral part of the access agenda is the ideal of lifelong learning to which Ireland has been committed since the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996. In higher education, lifelong learning has a particular meaning for adults who have few or no advanced qualifications and who wish to re-engage with the education system. The scale of higher education graduates that Ireland requires for achieving OECD front rank graduation levels and further social and economic progress cannot be sourced from the school leaving population alone. There is a need for significant and sustained increases in the numbers of mature students in order to upskill our adult population. Adult participation in higher education in Ireland is very low by international standards. The National Skills Strategy has reiterated this point. It has recommended upskilling 500,000 of the workforce by one level of education over the period to 2020. Such targets can only be achieved through increased opportunities and incentivisation for part-time, higher education participation. (HEA Strategic Plan 2008, 23)

Responsabilization has been defined by (Peters 2005; 131) as a modern form of self-government that requires individuals to make choices. Choice, assumes a much wider role under neo-liberalism, it is not simply “consumer sovereignty” but rather a moralization and responsabilitization, a regulated transfer of choice-making responsibility from the state to the individual in the social market (Peters 2005, 131).

Peters (2005) in his discussion about neo-liberalism in education introduces the concept of “prudentialism” to refer to the new form of insurance against risk that

is forced onto individuals as consumers (Peters 2005). One of these insurance forms is education.

Reducing uncertainty through education

Within this new configuration, economic activity that is associated increasingly with nonphysical production has become increasingly deterritorialised. In order to remain competitive, nation states must look into the future by maintaining a commitment to perpetual innovation. Maintaining a competitive margin requires identifying emerging markets, envisaging novel applications for existing products, and predicting future trends (Hay and Kapitzke 2009). In such an environment, advantage is considered increasingly dependent on the quality of human capital and investment in education, training and future-oriented activities such as research and development.

Higher education has never been more important - it fosters the development of a society enriched by active, well-educated citizens; it helps individuals develop to their full potential, and it provides the economy with skilled human capital. The evidence is overwhelming of significant returns from investment in formal education and training for the individual, and OECD countries that have invested well in higher education have enjoyed positive growth rates. (HEA Strategic Plan 2008 5)

Grounding imaginaries of uncertainty: Ireland's Smart Economy Strategy

In the case of Ireland, the problem of transition to the global knowledge economy has been characterized by discourses of uncertainty, instability and fear. Ireland is a small

country whose survival depends on moving away from the traditional economy to more high tech and skilled jobs.

A reliance on traditional manufacturing and low-skilled services will not be sufficient to allow developed countries like Ireland to remain at the forefront of economic and technological curves. The world is becoming flatter; basic tasks are now being outsourced as low-tech business services, and contract manufacturing are migrating to low cost areas such as China, India, South America and the newer EU Member States of Central and Eastern Europe as developed countries become more expensive. Developed countries can no longer rest their future on continuing to perform tasks that can easily be moved to low cost environments. Instead, they must provide services higher up the value chain, in areas that are less cost sensitive, but require ingenuity and creativity. (Building Ireland's Smart Economy 2008, 35)

While a globalised knowledge economy is clearly regarded as posing an imminent threat to Ireland's society and economy (e.g. multinationals taking their jobs to third-world countries), there is an equally clear indication that there is no alternative but to embrace change (Watson and Hay 2003). The urgent need for Ireland to embrace enterprise and innovation at every level was underscored in the *Building Ireland's Smart Economy* policy document through the problematisation of Ireland's position within the deterritorialised spaces of the global (Hay and Kapitzke 2009). This strategic planning policy emphasizes the need to manage uncertain futures by constituting a specific spatial imaginary (Hay and Kapitzke 2009) that positions Ireland within the same competitive space as those who have embraced the knowledge-based economy (e.g. the US).

A transformation of the Irish economy is necessary for sustained growth and increasing levels of future national welfare. In order to secure its economic future, Ireland must develop its own indigenous industry to complement the considerable external investment in enterprise. Innovation is the key ingredient to ensuring rising standards of living. General national welfare is highly dependent on the ability of a country to foster innovation and use that as a wealth-building platform. For example, the US has been at the forefront in many areas of innovation in terms of technology and services with Silicon Valley as the epicentre of entrepreneurialism. (Building Ireland's Smart Economy 2008, 35)

Ireland is contrasted here with other developed countries and deemed vulnerable through missing opportunities by not embracing innovation. The text constructs the national welfare as exposed to dangers of becoming stagnant and requires a proactive development of an enterprise culture. This shows how the conditions of possibility for the entrepreneur subject in Ireland includes ways of imagining the global present as a specific kind of space realized by a particular kind of responsabilised subject (Hay and Kapitzke 2009).

Pedagogy of the free

The pedagogy encouraged in HE is rooted in a neo-liberal conception of the citizen-consumer. The new pedagogical model is represented as an input–output system that can be reduced to an economic production function. The core dimensions are choice, flexibility, clearly defined objectives, and a results orientation (Olssen & Peters 2005). Probably one of the most important notions in a neo-liberal regime is the idea that human beings are free to make their own choices and therefore are solely

responsible for how well (or bad) they build their enterprise of the self. As Gordon (1991, 44) states neo-liberalism employs a notion of choice as a fundamental human faculty that overrides all social determinations. This is to say that students' success or failure is entirely up to him, no other factors are taken into account. Accountability then is an important aspect of the conception of the free and self-governing individual.

The public accountability of the higher education institutions underpins all areas of our activity and is central to our statutory mission. (HEA, Strategic Plan 2008 15)

Our vision for higher education, as articulated in this Strategic Plan, is the development of a sector that contributes to the advancement of society through empowered, dynamic, entrepreneurial, well-resourced and autonomous higher education institutions. These institutions are fully accountable to Government for expenditure of public funds and the delivery of national objectives. (HEA Strategic Plan 2008, 5)

Students are held accountable for the outcomes of their decisions. In this context, the student is seen as a free consumer who can make her own choices regarding her education. Teaching and learning strategies should be adapted to this new conceptualisation. 'Flexible approaches' are encouraged, students can choose between an array of courses, streams, electives, type of assessment, etc.

... the (HE) institutions will need to step up to a new level of performance; manage increased participation levels at undergraduate and postgraduate levels; enhance the quality of teaching and learning and deliver higher education using more innovative and flexible approaches (HEA Strategic Plan 2008, 13)

The HEA associates entrepreneurship with responsible individuals who resemble successful investors because they are able to maximise opportunity by speculating on the future. Through the concept of the knowledge-based economy, government legitimises the concepts of lifelong learning and entrepreneurship aimed at the production of flexible workers and the combined notions of education for work and enterprise education (Peters 2001).

The NDP has identified the following as development needs to be addressed over the lifetime of the plan: ... encourage a greater flexibility of course offerings to meet diverse student population needs in a lifelong learning context; promote the quality of teaching and learning; significantly increase PhD numbers and research activity; effective technology transfer... (HEA Strategic Plan 2008, 8)

An important dimension of a product sold in the market is its quality. Education has become a product on which the student decides to invest. The quality of the teaching and learning is fundamental. In a competitive market it is necessary to prove that your product is of good quality, therefore quality should be visible and measurable. In the case of teaching and learning, practices are standardised and measurable learning outcomes are introduced. Barnett (2000) uses the concept of 'performativity' to argue that marketization has become a new universal theme in HE. This is manifested in the trends towards the commodification of teaching and research and the various ways in which universities meet the new performative criteria, both locally and globally with the emphasis upon measurable outputs (Peters and Olssen 2005).

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was introduced in 2003; this is a single structure mechanism for recognising all education and training in Ireland

(NFQ, 2009). Awarding bodies like the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) use the NFQ when reviewing and validating programs in their recognised institutions. What the NFQ and HETAC have done is to place emphasis on the visible and therefore measurable aspects of the learning process. The stress now when designing modules, teaching strategies and assessments is on nationally agreed standards of knowledge, skill and competence. In order to be able to prove that the student has reached this level, teaching is designed around learning outcomes. The main characteristic of learning outcomes is that they should be measurable.

The emphasis on measurable standards illustrates a shift in the way of thinking about the learning process, from a cognitive to a behavioural approach. This exemplifies a validation of the behavioural paradigm, which had been undermined in the past decades by the teaching faculty. As Rose (1989) highlights behaviour modification, once the *bête noir* of progressives has become consonant with the liberating technologies of self-assertion (241). Neo-liberalism takes a notion of Homo Economicus that meets behaviourism to the extent that modifications in behaviour follow from remodelling the environment according to this market rationality (Gordon 1991, 44).

The conception of the student is one of a savvy consumer who wants clear specifications of what he is getting out of his investment in education. The educational outcome is no longer something that only the erudite professor can articulate but something that the student should be aware of at the beginning of his educational journey. The power to know that learning has occurred is now shared by the student and the teacher.

In this novel form of governance, responsabilised and prudential individuals are called upon to apply certain managerial, economic and actuarial techniques to

themselves as citizen-consumer subjects, calculating the risks and returns on investment in such areas as education. This process is both self-constitution and self-consuming. It is self-constituting in the Foucauldian sense that the choices we make shape us as morale, economic and political agents. It is self-consuming in the sense that the entrepreneurial self creates and constructs herself through acts of consumption (Peters 2005).

Knowledge capital as content in HE

The most significant material change that underpins neo-liberalism in the twenty-first century is the rise in the importance of knowledge as capital (Olssen and Peters 2005). The content that is valued in HE is that that can be commercialized and therefore has economic potential. It centers around two key notions: entrepreneurship and innovation.

The transformation of knowledge production and its legitimization, as Stiglitz indicates, are central to an understanding of neo-liberal globalization and its effects on education policy (Olssen and Peters 2005). If transformations in knowledge production entails a rethink of economic fundamentals, the shift to a knowledge economy also requires a profound rethink of education as an emerging form of knowledge capitalism, involving knowledge creation, acquisition, transmission and organization (Olssen and Peters 2005).

The Government's Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI) 2006 – 2013 outlines a strategy for transforming Ireland into a knowledge-based economy, in line with the Lisbon Agenda and continuing on from the National Development Plan.

The aim is that “Ireland by 2013 will be internationally renowned for the excellence of its research, and will be at the forefront in generating and using new knowledge for economic and social progress, within an innovation driven culture.”
(HEA Strategic Plan 2008, 26)

To encourage entrepreneurial content is now a priority for many HE institutions. Entrepreneurship can be seen in such trends as research collaborations between industry and academia where people from the industry work side-by-side with academics in the design of the course, teaching strategies and setting the learning outcomes. Clark (1998) described five cases of European universities that engaged in “entrepreneurial transformation” through the development of organizational restructuring and unique partnerships with private market actors with the intent of increasing institutional revenue flows.

We will seek to position Ireland as a location of choice in the International Education market. A number of initiatives to support life-long learning will be implemented. Restructuring the higher education system will be a priority with a new Higher Education Strategy to enhance system wide performance. Higher Education institutions will be supported in pursuing new organizational mergers and alliances that can advance performance through more effective concentration of expertise and investment. (Building Ireland’s Smart Economy 2008, 14-15)

The curriculum must reflect the new global and economic realities and focus on developing a highly educated flexible worker that possesses entrepreneurial and innovative characteristics. Under this umbrella of entrepreneurship and innovation

some contents are considered ‘priority areas’, for example maths, science and engineering due to their potential to be commercialised.

Under the Strategic Innovation Fund, priority will be given to flexible learning initiatives that can be targeted at up-skilling people in the workforce. We will use research funding through SFI, Enterprise Ireland and IDA to instil a commercialisation culture in third-level institutions alongside the now embedded teaching and research culture.

We will foster entrepreneurship, mathematical, science and language skills and prioritise the roll-out of Project Maths. We will promote study in priority areas through the Discover Science and Engineering programme, which will now assume a role in relation to maths. We will explore, in partnership with industry, development of a targeted programme of bursaries to increase participation in key engineering programmes at third level. Young Scientist winners will be linked with a third-level institution and/or a firm to enable them to bring their idea to development and the top 3 finalists will have laboratory/research space, as appropriate, in universities for the summer.(Building Ireland’s Smart Economy 2008, 14-15)

Conclusions

This paper has demonstrated how a neo-liberalism governmentality has permeated HE institutions which are critical in the government’s race towards a smart economy. HE institutions play a central role in constructing the type of subjectivity needed for economic success. A worrying aspect of these changes in HE is that education is framed only on economic terms with a lack of emphasis on critical thinking and social responsibility.

The analysis was based on two key documents, the Higher Education Authority's Strategic Plan 2008-2010 and the Government's report: Building Ireland's Smart Economy. The main objective of these documents is to reconfigure the relationship between businesses, government and HE institutions. The emphasis at a macro level is on economic success, HE institutions need to produce the types of subjectivities that are better suited for economic development. At a meso level the changes are seen by the type of knowledge and assessment favoured in HE. At a micro level we see students only as entrepreneurial and innovative subjects who need to be continuously engaged in the enterprise of the self.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the new changes brought about by the smart economy discourses is the ethical dimension of education. To become educated has come to be seen as a moral issue. It is the individual obligation to herself and to her country to become valuable human capital. Citizenship more than ever is defined on economic terms. To be uneducated or outside the labour market is unethical and against nature. Humans in the smart economy are defined as naturally entrepreneurial and innovative and it is their moral obligation to make sure that they develop this potential.

Despite the recent discourses on the smart economy, there has been little research in Ireland examining the student experience in HE and its relationship to the government's strategy for a smart economy. In our race towards economic success are there other important factors that we are overlooking?

Students' subjectivities in HE have been re-constructed to both reflect and reconstitute as practice a neo-liberal governmentality. Thus, for those of us who see the university as a site of critical education, the question is less of how can HE best serve the needs of a knowledge economy than how students have been re-configured

as neo-liberal subjects. Moreover, the issue is really one of understanding what the forces are that have influenced this re-construction and the implications of this for an egalitarian society. In a market-led society, is there any other way in which the citizen-consumer can influence public policy if not by acts of consumption?

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