

STUDENT EXCHANGE AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT: UK STUDENTS' STUDY ABROAD, 1955-1978

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When the United Kingdom has been considered in the context of modern study abroad, it has primarily been viewed as a host country, with minimal attention devoted to the study abroad patterns of UK students themselves. In order to form a comprehensive understanding of the UK's involvement in post-war study abroad initiatives, this talk explores the UK's position within the extensive data collected by UNESCO in the postwar period. From this evidence, it will be argued that the UK was, in fact, one of the most active nations in sending its students overseas, and this engagement notably intensified during the 1960s and 1970s, both in absolute numbers and relative to other countries.

After briefly analysing the UK's dual role as both a host destination and an exporter of study abroad students on a global scale, I will examine its relationship as a sender country with three specific geopolitical regions: firstly, the Commonwealth, which has received substantial attention in the existing historiography; secondly, continental Europe; and thirdly the USA, regions that have received comparatively less scrutiny from historians.

Various factors which contributed to the significant increase in the number of UK students pursuing studies abroad will be considered. In particular, I will focus on the influence of government attitudes toward overseas education, including the potential for utilising student exchange as a tool of cultural diplomacy. Special emphasis is placed on the period between the publication of the Robbins Report in 1963 and the early institutionalisation of study abroad in Europe in the late 1970s.

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