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

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ABSTRACT: When the United Kingdom has figured in the modern history of study abroad, it has featured almost exclusively in the role of host country with little attention paid to the study abroad patterns of UK students. In order to gain a rounded picture of the UK's role in post-war study abroad, this article explores the position of the UK within the context of the rich data gathered by UNESCO. It argues that there is strong evidence that the UK was actually one of the most active countries in sending its students overseas and that this activity increased (both in absolute terms and relative to other countries) significantly in the 1960s and 70s. Following a brief analysis of the UK's role as both a host and exporter of study abroad students on a global scale, its relationship as a sender country with two particular geographical areas is considered: firstly, the Commonwealth that has been the focus of much of the existing secondary literature, and secondly, continental Europe and the USA which have featured much less frequently in the work of historians. Various reasons for the significant rise in the number of UK students studying abroad are explored – in particular, the role of government attitudes towards overseas study including the possibility of developing student exchange as an instrument of cultural diplomacy. The article pays particular attention to the period between the publication of the Robbins Report in 1963 and the beginnings of the institutionalisation of study abroad (in Europe) in the late 1970s.

Keywords: student exchange, study abroad, United Kingdom, UNESCO

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing interest in the modern history of study abroad, particularly in the USA (Bevis, 2013; Bevis, 2019; Hoffa and DePaul, 2010), China (Han and Tong, 2021; Shu, 2011), France (Walton, 2009) and Germany (Alter, 2000; Oldac and Fancourt, 2021). With the exception of a few studies looking at bilateral student exchanges between the UK and other countries (Windsor, 2014), Britain, however, has featured almost exclusively as the host and receiver of 'foreign' students (Braithwaite, 2001; Byrne, 2021; Lee, 1998, 2006; Perraton, 2014, 2020). Despite substantial scholarly interest in the question of student

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internationalism in the UK, particularly in connection with the NUS (Brewis, 2014; Burkett, 2014), little is known about UK students' study abroad especially in the post-war period that this article will concentrate on. If we take a closer look at those studies that have explored Britain's role as a host country for overseas students, we see that most attention has been paid to the relationship with students from Commonwealth countries (Braithwaite, 2001; Lee, 2006; Pietsch, 2011, 2013; Stockwell, 2008). To some extent, this may reflect a broader tendency in British historiography – to separate the histories of Britain's relationship with its former colonies from those with other parts of the world, including Europe. This tendency is visible across different areas of historical scholarship including the history of higher education. The work of Tamson Pietsch, in particular, has encouraged the study of what has been termed 'the British academic world', which refers to the various networks established between universities in the UK and parts of the British Empire and Commonwealth, especially the white settler colonies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Pietsch, 2011, 2013). While such studies are vital for understanding the role which educational and scholarly links played in maintaining the British Empire, they also shape the historiographical landscape in important ways. Firstly, they tend to privilege and perpetuate a traditional binary of centre and periphery with Britain as the 'mother country' and the colonies at the edge. Second, an exclusive focus on connections with Britain's (former) colonies tends to minimise other important relationships that Britain cultivated in the same period, in particular, with continental Europe (Ellis, 2015, 2017). This helps to explain, in part, why there has been relatively little scholarly attention paid to Britain's role as a 'sender country' of students abroad. Focusing on this role has the effect of decentring Britain by highlighting the lure of other study destinations for UK students with the implication that what they need cannot be found at home. Despite the considerable inroads made by global and transnational history in recent years, British historiography is still, at times, pervaded by a narrative of exceptionalism that can treat the UK as though it existed, to some extent, apart from international and global trends (Colvin, 2018; Spiering, 2015).

We see this, for example, in the kinds of sources that are most frequently used by historians looking at Britain's relationship with overseas students. Most studies use data collected primarily by UK-based organizations, in particular, the British Council. While the British Council has high-quality data relating to the number of overseas students studying in the UK and for those UK students studying abroad on named programmes like the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, it has not routinely collected information about the thousands of other UK students (the vast majority in fact) who undertake study abroad on their own initiative. To gain a clear sense, not only of which countries were sending students to the UK (and in what numbers), but also how many students from the UK were travelling abroad for study and where they were heading, we need to consult data collected on a global scale. For this, the best data available are those gathered by UNESCO

and published both in its *Statistical Yearbooks* and *Statistics of Students Abroad* volumes between 1962 and 1978 (UNESCO, 1972, 1976, 1982). While these data were primarily collected through a detailed survey of 'foreign students' carried out every year, in the 1962–1968 *Statistics of Students Abroad* edition UNESCO gathered significant additional information from countries that had not typically supplied data to the annual survey (UNESCO, 1972). We will see that there is strong evidence that Britain was actually one of the most active countries in sending its students overseas – and that this activity increased (both in absolute terms and relative to other countries) significantly in the 1960s and 70s.

Drawing on insights from transnational historical approaches that have been particularly influential in the history of higher education (Charle, 2013; Ellis, 2020; Scot, 2020), this article argues that it is vital to consider Britain's role as both a sending and receiving country together. Even in cases where UK students travelled abroad under their own steam (and not as part of a reciprocal exchange programme), their destinations were frequently influenced by existing networks of student exchange, which were sometimes based on specific institutional relationships between universities and colleges. Moreover, trends within UK students' study abroad and the arrival of overseas students in the UK were both significantly shaped by the overarching policy landscape of the British government: as we will see, the comprehensive reform of UK higher education in the 1960s, following the recommendations of the 1963 Robbins report, was closely linked to the provision made for overseas students in the UK and, in turn, to the opportunities for UK students to study overseas. While the article will address specific questions about how many UK students were studying overseas (both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of total students enrolled), and where they travelled for study, UK study abroad trends will, at all times, be viewed against the wider context of overseas students coming to the UK.

Following a brief analysis of Britain's role as both a host and exporter of study abroad students on a global scale, Britain's relationship as a sender country with two particular geographical areas will be considered: firstly, the Commonwealth that has been the focus of much of the existing secondary literature, and secondly, continental Europe and the USA which have featured much less frequently in the work of historians. Various reasons for the significant rise in the number of UK students studying abroad will be explored – in particular, the role of government attitudes towards overseas study including the possibility of developing student exchange as an instrument of cultural diplomacy. The article will pay particular attention to the period between the publication of the Robbins Report in 1963 and the beginnings of the institutionalisation of study abroad (in a European context) in the late 1970s. Alongside the detailed analysis of the UNESCO data, key documentary sources will be consulted including British government papers, in particular, select committee reports and evidence as well as documents produced by other publicly funded organisations such as the British Council. Contributions to

parliamentary debate from across the political spectrum will also be drawn on. We will also make use of a range of documents produced by relevant non-governmental organisations with an interest in study abroad including bodies such as The Overseas Students Trust and the National Union of Students who communicated regularly with policy makers and gave evidence before relevant select committees.

2. NUMBERS AND DESTINATIONS OF UK STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS

Before proceeding to analyse the UNESCO data on UK study abroad students in the post-war period, it may be helpful to say a brief word about definitions, in particular, what we mean by a 'UK study abroad student'. In the 1960s and 70s, UNESCO made use primarily of a residence criterion: For UNESCO a 'student abroad' was 'a person enrolled at an institution of higher education in a country or territory of which he [sic] is not a permanent resident' (UNESCO, 1972, p. 9). They contrasted this with a 'nationality concept' used by other organisations and some countries. Helpfully, for the purposes of this article, UNESCO's multi-year volumes of *Statistics of Students Abroad* make clear that the UK also relied on 'the notion of residence' at this time when classifying 'students abroad'. In the case of the UK, we are told, 'it is specified that the data exclude any student who has resided, or whose parents have resided, in the United Kingdom for at least three years prior to the commencement of the course' (UNESCO, 1972, p. 9). This statement is consistent with British Council and British government definitions of UK study abroad students. A residence criterion was also used by the Robbins Committee to define 'home' or UK students when setting out its report on the future of higher education in Britain in 1963 (Robbins, 1963, p. 15). When referring to 'study abroad', UNESCO made no distinction between students who spent a limited amount of time abroad as part of their degree in their home country and those who were pursuing their entire course of study abroad. The same approach is followed in this article.The yearly publication of UNESCO *Statistical Yearbooks* (from 1963) and, in particular, the trilogy of multi-year volumes of *Statistics of Students Abroad* published for the years 1962–1968; 1969–1973 and 1974–1978 are valuable sources of reliable data for studies investigating 'foreign students' studying in Britain. They are, however, equally important for those researching the numbers and destinations of UK study abroad students. As the introduction to the 1969–1973 volume makes clear:

> [T]he expression "foreign students" has been used when students were discussed in respect of their country or region of study; whereas "students abroad" was used when students were discussed in relation to their country or region of origin. However, on the aggregated world scale the two expressions were used alternatively, since the world total of foreign students is identical to that of students abroad (UNESCO, 1976, p. 9).

Indeed, UNESCO sought explicitly to make countries aware that its statistics could be used to find out information not only about changing patterns of foreign students studying in their own country but also about the activities of their own students studying abroad:

> Member states [of UNESCO] usually know about the foreign students studying in their own country, and normally have this information in considerable detail. Many also have information on their own nationals who are studying abroad on official fellowships. What they rarely know, however, is how many of their nationals are studying abroad outside the official fellowship programme, where they are studying; or what they are studying … By combining all the countries of study for which data were available, it was possible to reorganise the data so that they could be re-examined in terms of the country of origin (UNESCO, 1972, pp. 8-9).

Before taking a closer look at the UK's role as a sender country, it is worth considering the UK's more familiar role as a receiver and host of overseas students. According to UNESCO data (see Table 1 below), and in line with the historiography, across this period, the UK remained consistently among the top five study abroad destinations in the world. The highest ranking it achieved was third out of the top 15 destinations and it never fell below number five in terms of popularity. It not only successfully maintained this position between 1955 and 1978 but actually increased its share in terms of hosting foreign students from 5.8% of the world total in 1955 to 6.9% in 1978.

As we will see, however, this is only half the story. As suggested by the quotation above taken from UNESCO's *Statistics of Students Abroad, 1962–1968*, 'foreign students' and 'students abroad' are two sides of the same coin; host countries are also countries of origin and unless a detailed picture of both roles is achieved, neither can be understood properly. This is where the use of UNESCO data, collected on a global scale, is so important. If we restrict ourselves to national statistics alone, such as those gathered by the British Council, in the case of the UK, we are only able to see the UK in the role of host or receiving country.While there is a general tendency for the percentage of nationally enrolled students studying abroad to decline over the period considered here, the percentage of UK students

TABLE 1. UK as host country

	1955	1962	1968	1974	1978
Total foreign students studying in UK	8619	14,020	16,154	40,838	59,625
Percentage of world total	5.8%	5.3%	3.8%	6.7%	6.9%

Data from UNESCO (1955/6); *Statistics of Students Abroad* 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 2. Percentage of total national students enrolled (at home and abroad) studying abroad

	1955	1962	1968	1973	1978
UK	2.9	4.8	4.9	3.1	1.8
USA	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2
France	0.9	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.1
Canada	10.1	5.9	5.6	1.9	2.2

Data from UNESCO (1955/6); *Statistics of Students Abroad* 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

(enrolled at home and abroad) studying abroad remained higher than in many other developed countries (see Table 2). And this was despite the significant expansion of university places domestically which happened following the Robbins Report published in 1963. Between 1955 and 1968, the percentage of enrolled UK students studying abroad rose steadily from 2.9% to 4.9% before falling back somewhat in the subsequent decade to 1978. Even then, at 1.8% of total UK enrolments, the UK still had considerably more students studying abroad than the USA (0.2% in 1978 and this figure had never risen above 0.3%) and France (1.1% from a high of 2.1% in 1962). Although at the start of our period, Canada had a much higher proportion of enrolled students studying abroad (10.1%), this declined sharply over the subsequent twenty years, in line with the expansion of domestic university provision, ending up only slightly higher than the comparable figure for the UK – 2.2% compared with 1.8%.

UK GOVERNMENT POLICY – FROM COMMONWEALTH TO DEVELOPMENT

Having gained an insight into the broad trends over time, what sense can be made of these in terms of UK government policy? The first point to make is that it is actually quite difficult to establish a clear policy agenda from the UK government with regard to either sending (or encouraging) students to study abroad. This is in line with what has been found by historians investigating the history of overseas students in the UK. As Hilary Perraton has written, ‘changes in [overseas] student numbers [in the UK], and in practices affecting them, were often a response to foreign students and their circumstances rather than a consequence of deliberate policy’ (Perraton, 2014, p. 229). The same caution must apply to the movements of UK students travelling abroad for study. The choice to study overseas was always a decision influenced by a range of different factors.

This point was made at the time. Writing in 1981, shortly after the end of the period under review, the Overseas Students Trust, a non-government body set up in the 1960s to campaign for the interests of overseas students in Britain,

identified a range of factors it considered were limiting the UK government's ability to make impactful policy in the area both of overseas students studying in the UK and UK students studying abroad. For policy relating to overseas students coming to the UK, the Trust stressed the role of '[t]he institutionalised autonomy not only of universities but also of local education authorities' and the fact that it 'limits – as it was intended to – the ability of central government to impose a sense of direction' (Wallace, 1981, p. 114). Yet, they, concluded, there was also a failure from government to secure consensus on the issue of overseas students and study abroad.

Evidence from UK parliamentary debate supports the idea of a failure to develop a coherent policy on this issue, driven largely, it would seem, by the belief that it was not appropriate for government to (be seen to) interfere with the autonomy of universities or to intermix cultural with foreign policy. The 1970/1 Expenditure Committee report on the British Council declared that '[t]he Committee [felt] strongly that cultural relations should be kept as far removed as possible from general considerations of foreign policy' (First Report from the Expenditure Committee, 1971, p. xii). It criticised departures from this principle when it seemed to the Committee that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) had compromised the independence of the British Council (pp. xii–xiii). To emphasise this point, the same report rejected wholesale the approach of the West German government which had declared 'unequivocally that they regarded cultural relations as an arm of foreign policy and a matter over which they possessed ultimate control' (p. xii).The bulk of secondary literature that has considered Britain's involvement with the Commonwealth from the point of view of study abroad has focused almost exclusively on Britain's role as host. The work of Tamson Pietsch and others has shown the centrality of Britain's universities, especially Oxford and Cambridge, to the maintenance and extension of the cultural imperialism of the British Empire. Pietsch's own work has focused primarily on the 'elite … white, middle-class men' from the settler colonies (Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada) who came to study in England's universities before, in many cases, returning to their countries to take up university appointments (Pietsch, 2013, p. ix). Pietsch (2011, 2013) interrogates and exposes the scholarship schemes, networks of influence and other mechanisms that underlay and made possible the 'British academic world' of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other work focuses instead on the students who came to study in the UK through both imperial and latterly Commonwealth networks, from developing countries such as India, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria and Botswana (Braithwaite, 2001; Lee, 2006; Perraton, 2014). This work has also stressed the importance of these ties for the emotional and psychological maintenance of the structures of power and influence underpinning the British Empire. Even after decolonisation, students from former colonies continued to travel to study in Britain in large numbers, indeed, well into

the 1980s. It was one of the chief responsibilities of the British Council in the post-war period to facilitate the arrival of Commonwealth scholars coming to study in the UK (Perraton, 2014; Wallace, 1981).

In the post-war decades, however, under the influence of decolonisation and growing criticism of Britain's imperial role, the language within British government circles shifted from one of strengthening Britain's position in the Commonwealth to one of supporting 'development' which was in line with UN discourse in this period. Writing in 1981, the Overseas Students Trust argued that the debate about overseas student policy over the past 15 years had shifted from one dominated by the needs of the Commonwealth to a discussion of how best 'to accommodate the demand for education and training in the developing countries' (Wallace, 1981, pp. 121–122). While a shift towards the language of 'development' was in part aimed at changing international perceptions of Britain's role from one of imperial power to aiding and assisting poorer countries, Britain's role as host *and* sender of study abroad students remained an important tool for prolonging and securing its interests and influence on the international stage. As the Overseas Students Trust expressed it, the presence of overseas students from developing countries in Britain was 'also seen as promoting Britain's political and commercial interests' (Wallace, 1981, p. 123). While questioning the extent to which 'a post imperial Britain should still seek to exert independent political influence outside the North Atlantic area', they readily acknowledged that 'in a period when "resource diplomacy" has become part of the vocabulary of foreign policy, when the interaction between political relations and oil supplies is self-evident', in the view of the UK government, 'there remains a need to maintain . . . political influence over Third-World governments for which purpose the informal contacts and goodwill provided by past study in Britain by rising men of influence may help' (Wallace, 1981, p. 125).

Britain's role in hosting overseas students was also important to the UK government in relation to ongoing pressure (especially from the USA) to oppose ideologically and politically the Soviet East, particularly with regard to the potential infiltration of Commonwealth countries. In 1978, the House of Commons Expenditure Committee expressed regret that the Central Policy Review Staff, in its review of UK Overseas Representation, had not added a fifth objective to Britain's stated overseas objectives, namely, 'to promote the English language and British culture' (Fourth Report from the Expenditure Committee, 1978, p. xxiv). It was important to the UK government to be seen, as the Foreign Office put it, to demonstrate concern for 'values and freedoms' (The United Kingdom's Overseas Representation, p. 3). 'The standing of this country', it continued, 'in the eyes of the world is bound up with our stand on human rights, on how far we can make our values, political, social and cultural, understood' (p. 4). Conservative MP for Stroud and a Vice-Chairman of the British Council,

Anthony Kershaw, expressed a similar sentiment in an adjournment debate on overseas student policy on 16 February 1976:

> . . . [T]his is not a matter merely of trade and of economics. It is about the English language, the British way of life. It is about what Burke called 'our leadership in equality and in training for freedom which is the peculiar and appropriate glory of England', and which still endures though the empire has passed away (Kershaw, 1976, Column 1097).

Here, we see a case being made for the replacement of Britain's formal role as an imperial power with an informal role as moral influencer, due apparently to the innate superiority of its moral and cultural values. The UK's role as both host and sender of study abroad students is relevant here: as host, overseas students would be exposed to 'the British way of life'; as sender, UK study abroad students could act as 'ambassadors' of Britain's 'training for freedom'. In the post-war period, both Labour and Conservative governments had publicly expressed the view that foreign policy should be used to promote and protect human rights as well as civil and political freedoms, both in the developing countries of the Commonwealth and in the socialist states of Eastern Europe. The idea that student exchange might function as an effective tool of cultural diplomacy had a long history in UK policy circles, dating back at least as far as the interwar years (Byrne, 2021; Taylor, 1978).

This image of 'a post imperial Britain' (Wallace, 1981, p. 125) still seeking to exert political influence outside the North Atlantic area remained problematic even when it was framed within the language of development. This was clear from the early years of decolonisation when the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan was established in 1959. As part of a debate on the success of the scheme in the House of Commons on 19 November 1962, George Thomson, Labour MP for Dundee East, stressed the extent to which he felt, the scheme promoted a vital sense of mutual understanding between UK students and students from other parts of the Commonwealth:

> Any of us who have had the privilege of welcoming the Commonwealth scholars when they arrive here in the autumn of each year will have found what an excellent group of young men and women they are, how much reality they give to so many of the things we say about the Commonwealth, and what the possibilities are of this kind of plan continuing and expanding as time passes . . . The Commonwealth scholarship scheme does a good educational job, but it also does a good job for the Commonwealth, because it provides just that kind of cross-fertilisation of Commonwealth contacts which gives the Commonwealth more reality as a world-wide community (Thomson, 1962, Column 833).

This is in line with Perraton's analysis of the Plan which stresses the extent to which it was designed to strengthen 'Commonwealth cohesion' (Perraton, 2015, pp. 38–9). Thomson made the point explicitly that Britain's post-imperial role as

'donor' to 'developing countries', many of whom were former British colonies, still left it vulnerable to considerable international criticism. He was keen to present the Commonwealth Scholarships scheme as a species of mutual aid programme, a reciprocal agreement with benefits for both sides:

> It is based on the principle of mutual aid; that is, it is not simply a scheme in which the richer and more privileged members of the Commonwealth help the poorer and less privileged. It is a co-operative scheme in which Eastern Africa finds places at Makerere College for people from New Zealand just as New Zealand provides places for people from Africa. In this way, it takes the edge off what can very often be the corrupting donor-recipient relationship in the emerging and developing countries, and helps to cope with one of the practical problems of giving economic aid by the richer to the poorer countries. For these reasons, it is an especially important scheme (Thomson, 1962, Column 833).

If we only focus on the history of overseas students studying in Britain, we can easily miss this aspect of the debate, the considerable importance, for reputational reasons, placed by British MPs on encouraging reciprocal flows of students in the context of the Commonwealth. 'The scheme should remain a co-operative one in which all Commonwealth countries participate fully', Thomson (1962, Column 836) declared. He hoped that the reputational advantage Britain might gain through representing itself as the leading member of an essentially egalitarian cooperative scheme (as opposed to the blatantly unequal relationship of donor/former imperial power-recipient/former colony) might help secure and prolong Britain's influence as a great power on the world stage. It might even help the UK to hold its own against the increasingly powerful USA:

> There is an immense value in students from this country … being able to go overseas to universities in India or Africa … We are doing this in a world in which the US … has launched its tremendously imaginative Peace Corps, a big part of which is an educational offensive to help the underdeveloped countries. We must, therefore, move much faster (Thomson, 1962, Column 836-837).

This view seems to have been shared by the British Council. In evidence given before the Select Committee on Estimates on 24 February 1970, Reginald Phillips, Deputy Director-General of the British Council, described scholarships and study abroad opportunities as being conducted in 'a spirit of reciprocal good will' and declared, '[W]e are anxious to see more British students going overseas' (First Report from the Expenditure Committee, 1971, p. 72). We can see an earlier effort to make use of UK study abroad students with a view to improving the international image of the Commonwealth (and Britain's role in it) in the so-called 'Study and Serve Scheme' which was announced at the Commonwealth Education conference in Ottawa in 1964. The aim of the scheme was to provide 1000 British students over 3 years to study and work in 'developing Commonwealth countries.' Speaking in a debate in the House of Commons on Commonwealth Teachers, the Conservative

MP for Lewisham North, Christopher Chataway, (1966, Column 556), explained the initiative as follows:

> Under this scheme, graduates are able to go out to universities and other institutions of higher education in Commonwealth countries, do a year's post-graduate study at these institutions, and then continue giving a year's service after they have finished their research. It was a condition of their being sent out under this scheme that they would give that service after their research was finished. We said at the Ottawa Conference that we expected a build-up of the numbers in the study and serve scheme to about 1,000 over the next five years.

Particular weight was placed on the fact that British students (as well as students from other developed Commonwealth countries such as New Zealand and Australia under similar schemes) would both study at universities in developing Commonwealth states (and thus learn from these countries) *and* serve through their subsequent role as teachers. Here we see the same emphasis placed on mutual aid and cooperation as we witnessed in Thomson's discussion of the Commonwealth Scholarships scheme above. Another factor encouraging the UK government to place greater emphasis on reciprocal exchange programmes with the Commonwealth was the growing resentment expressed by some sections of the British public at the presence of growing numbers of Commonwealth students in Britain and the real risk this posed to relations with the Commonwealth by the early 1960s. This was an issue raised by members on both sides of the House. In a Commons debate from 19 November 1962, discussed above, George Thomson, Labour MP for Dundee East, spoke about the growing numbers of overseas students in local authority technical colleges: 'We hear a lot about the problems of an excessively high number of overseas students in their ranks.' 'It would be disastrous for the reputation of this country', he declared, 'if things got to the point where people were beginning to feel that there was a direct conflict and competition between the overseas students and the children of our constituents who are trying to get places at universities' (Thomson, 1962, Column 838). According to Tam Dalyell, Labour MP for Linlithgow, this was already happening. He called for 'a vast and dramatic expansion' in domestic university provision to counteract

> the fact that people are already asking whether British youngsters are to be deprived of a university education for which they have the right qualifications because we must accept so many students from Africa and Asia … Candidates are asked … at election times whether they are aware of the shortage of university places … [C]onstituents … say at meetings, "My Johnny, who has the qualifications to enter a university, cannot get in, while 'So-and-so' from Nigeria can" (Dalyell, 1962, Column 858).

Richard Hornby, Conservative MP for Tonbridge, reiterated the crucial point about the interconnectedness of government policy towards overseas students coming to the UK and policy towards UK university students at home. 'Our ability to contribute to Commonwealth education', he declared, 'is linked with the amount that we are able to do for ourselves in this respect' (Hornby, 1962, Column 843–844). In his contribution, George Thomson spoke of an abject 'failure to plan for sufficient places to meet the needs of students in the UK' (Thomson, 1962, Column 838) and stressed the importance of the debate about overseas students to the findings of the Robbins Report which was to make recommendations for a wide-ranging reform of UK higher education when it was published in 1963. In their report, the Robbins Committee stressed their commitment to and belief in a system of international student exchange. Study abroad, they wrote, 'fosters a sense of international community on both sides. It encourages a valuable give-and-take' and comes with considerable 'diplomatic and economic advantages' (Robbins, 1963, p. 67). To avoid a 'dwindling' in the number of overseas students coming to Britain and a greater degree of public acceptance of overseas students was one of the reasons the Report argued for a much greater provision of domestic higher education places for UK students; and part of this provision was greater access to and promotion of study abroad opportunities for UK students (Robbins, 1963, p. 67). Historians of education writing about the reforms recommended by Robbins have tended to view these exclusively within a domestic UK context (e.g. Collini, 2011; Scott, 2014), but it is important to acknowledge the extent to which the Robbins Committee understood their reforms within an international context; their Report contained extensive reflections on international comparisons, research visits overseas and the international system of student exchange (as both host and sender) of which the UK was part in the early 1960s (e.g. Robbins, 1963, pp. 35–47).

3. UNESCO DATA – 'DISAPPOINTING CO-OPERATION' WITH THE COMMONWEALTH?

The awareness of perceived disparities particularly within Commonwealth educational exchange programmes was touched upon by the President of India, Rajendra Prasad, at the Second Commonwealth Educational Conference in Delhi in 1962. According to Joan Vickers, Conservative and National Liberal MP for Plymouth Devonport, speaking in a Commons debate on the Commonwealth Scholarships Bill on 19 November 1962:

> He expressed the hope that the spirit of mutual assistance and cooperation would be greatly strengthened and would contribute to the strengthening of the bonds of friendship and good will which hold the Commonwealth together . . . He went on to say: "Without the expansion of educational facilities progress is apt to be tardy and lopsided; indeed it may result in the creation of undesirable stresses and strains" (Vickers, 1962, Column 860-861).

TABLE 3. Number of UK students studying abroad in other Commonwealth countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Australia	54	137	217	174	180
Canada	650	851	2303	-	2869
India	12	93	116	249	-
Pakistan	27	5	-	9	-
Nigeria	16	9	-	-	-
Uganda	10	75	31	2	4
USA	1432	3118	3859	2770	4300

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8 Key: – = no entry available

TABLE 4. Number of students from India studying abroad in other Commonwealth countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Australia	109	108	146	130	162
Canada	408	921	1277	-	615
Nigeria	4	3	-	-	-
Pakistan	112	4	-	-	-
Uganda	-	-	7	-	-
UK	1746	1711	1190	1416	916
USA	6152	7518	12,526	9663	9400

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 5. Number of students from Pakistan studying abroad in other Commonwealth countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Australia	55	74	99	60	53
Canada	114	223	299	-	236
India	202	107	6	3	-
Nigeria	2	-	-	-	-
Uganda	-	-	7	-	-
UK	619	952	1214	887	745
USA	837	1231	2001	3140	2420

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

'Can we go quickly enough with this educational programme to stop the stresses and strains that were mentioned by the President of India?', Vickers (1962, Column 861) asked. The main obstacle, in her mind, was the considerable imbalance in the flows between the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries, the 'lopsidedness' that

Rajendra Prasad had warned about. 'If my figures are correct', Vickers (1962, Column 862) stated,

> I think that the co-operation is … disappointing. We have sent only 10 United Kingdom students to Canada, while Canada has sent 17 here; we have sent four to Australia, which has sent us 15; India appears to have sent 35 and we have sent none to India, while Pakistan has sent 18 and we have sent to Pakistan only one student. How are we co-operating in sending our students overseas? I am glad to see that two have gone to the University of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, but not enough United Kingdom students are going overseas, and it is as important for United Kingdom students to go overseas as for Commonwealth students to come here.

Vickers was here quoting figures collected specifically in relation to the Commonwealth Scholarships scheme by the British Council. If we consult the much more comprehensive statistics compiled by UNESCO for the whole period between 1962 (when the Scholarship scheme began) and 1978, do we also see evidence of the imbalance she highlights? According to the figures presented by Vickers, this imbalance was visible even with developed member

TABLE 6. Number of students from Nigeria studying abroad in other Commonwealth countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Australia	7	32	94	27	50
Canada	93	151	212	-	656
India	22	25	20	53	-
Pakistan	5	5	-	1	-
Uganda	20	35	8	12	-
UK	1090	904	937	2084	4192
USA	813	1732	2333	7210	16,220

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 7. Number of students from Uganda studying abroad in other Commonwealth countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Australia	9	18	5	10	18
Canada	19	47	47	-	65
India	252	575	741	151	-
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-
Pakistan	8	9	-	7	-
UK	215	242	498	189	163
USA	127	239	263	240	380

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

states such as Canada and Australia but was more extreme in the case of developing countries such as India and Pakistan. Looking at the UNESCO statistics (see Tables 3, 4 and 5), we do indeed see the same patterns. While, in 1962, the UK sent 27 students in total to India and 12 to Pakistan, Pakistan sent some 619 students to the UK and India 1746. By 1974, the disparity had reduced somewhat with the numbers travelling from the UK to India increasing to 249 and the number sent by India falling to 916. In the case of Pakistan, the numbers coming to study in the UK had risen by 1974 but only slightly to 745, while the number coming from the UK had decreased from 12 to 9. Over the period between 1962 and 1978, the numbers of students from Pakistan and India travelling to study in the USA were much greater, with 6152 Indian and 837 Pakistani students making their way to the US in 1962 which by 1978 had reached 9400 and 2420, respectively.

Developments look similar in the case of Commonwealth member states in Africa. As can be seen in Tables 6 and 7, in 1962, the UK sent only 16 students to Nigeria (which sent 1090 to the UK) and 10 to Uganda which sent 215 to the UK. It is possible that these lower numbers are partly due to additional logistical challenges encountered by students travelling to study in Nigeria and Uganda. By 1978, Nigeria was sending almost four times as many students – 4192 – to the UK while the UK is not recorded as sending any students in return. In the case of Uganda, slightly fewer students were travelling to the UK in 1978 (163) than in 1962, while the UK sent only 4 students (less than the 10 in 1962). So, despite the changes in absolute numbers, the overall balance of the relationship did not alter, with the UK sending far fewer students to both Nigeria and Uganda than those countries sent to the UK. As with India and Pakistan, the USA overtook the UK as the English-speaking study destination of choice for both Nigeria and Uganda. While both countries had sent more students to the UK than the USA in 1962 (1090 compared with 813 and 215 compared with 127 respectively), this had changed completely in 1978 with Nigeria sending some 16,220 students to the US in 1978 compared with just 4192 to the UK and Uganda sending 380 to the USA compared with 163 to the UK.

If we turn to look at the situation in wealthier Commonwealth countries like Canada and Australia, the picture is somewhat less clear. In the figures quoted by Joan Vickers above, although smaller, there was still a clear disparity between the numbers of students sent to the UK by Canada and Australia (which were higher) and those sent by the UK in return. When we look at the UNESCO statistics; however, in 1962, the flow between the UK and Canada was almost perfectly balanced with the UK sending 650 students to Canada and Canada sending 657 to the UK. By 1978, the UK was sending four times as many – some 2869 students – to Canada, while Canada was sending only about a third more students to the UK – 975 compared with 657 in 1962. As in the case of the developing

TABLE 8. Number of students from Canada studying abroad in other Commonwealth countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Australia	21	55	93	103	101
India	3	8	6	14	-
Nigeria	-	1	-	-	-
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-
Uganda	2	-	1	-	-
UK	657	742	1118	1025	975
USA	7004	12,117	12,595	8430	15,120

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 9. Number of students from Australia studying abroad in other Commonwealth countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Canada	58	107	313	-	194
India	4	5	5	3	-
Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-
Pakistan	-	-	-	-	-
Uganda	-	-	1	-	-
UK	401	477	541	745	757
USA	476	864	1045	950	1680

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

Commonwealth countries, the number of students that Canada sent to the USA (which was after all its close neighbour) was growing at a considerably higher rate with figures more than doubling over the same period of time (see Table 8). The picture in the case of Australia is similar. While the number of UK students travelling to Australia more than trebled between 1962 and 1978 (from 54 to 180), the number being sent the other way less than doubled in the same period from 401 to 757 students (see Table 9). Again, one of the factors likely responsible for this trend is the growth in the proportion of students travelling from Australia to the US that almost quadrupled from 476 to 1962 to 1680 in 1978. Movement within the Commonwealth between developed and developing member states (not including the UK) remained relatively stable over the same period.

From a consideration of the UNESCO data, then, it is clear that the UK's role as a host country was indeed more significant with regard to both developed and developing member states of the Commonwealth throughout the period covered by this article. Yet it is important to stress that the disparity between the number of students received by the UK and those sent out was significantly greater with regard to developing as opposed to developed Commonwealth countries. Moreover, despite the UK continuing to

receive more students than it sent out from countries like Canada and Australia, it was gradually being overtaken as a study destination of choice by the USA. This trend is also visible in the case of developing Commonwealth countries such as Nigeria and Uganda.

4. EXCHANGE WITH EUROPE AND THE USA: BALANCING THE FLOWS?

Although much attention has been paid to Commonwealth student exchange programmes in the historiography of foreign students in Britain, the most popular destinations for UK study abroad students (as we see from Table 10), were actually in Europe, closely followed by the USA. France alone accounted for a significant proportion of the number going to study in Europe, sometimes almost half. This is in line with UNESCO analysis that the majority of study abroad students preferred relative geographic proximity to their home country (UNESCO, 1972, p. 35). In 1955, for example, some 664 out of a total of 984 UK study abroad students chose France as their destination. Twenty years later, almost 40% of UK students choosing to study in Europe were still choosing France. Switzerland was also consistently an important destination for UK students, although declining in significance over the period under study. This was no doubt in part also due to the growing tendency (especially from the late 1960s onwards) for British students studying language degrees in the UK to undertake a 'year abroad' as part of their course with the most popular destinations being France and Germany (Coleman, 2005).

Despite the fact that a majority of UK study abroad students travelled to Europe and North America for study, these links have been little studied by historians, less so even than educational exchange with the Commonwealth. Yet it is worth examining UK study abroad policy in relation to Europe alongside Commonwealth exchange programmes as it highlights important similarities and differences between the study destinations. As was the case with Commonwealth countries, the aims of the British government in encouraging UK study abroad students to travel to European countries were complex. However, economic motivations tended to predominate. As the Overseas Students Trust explained, 'the competition for economic advantage is first and foremost with our immediate neighbours. … The relevant analogues here must above all be France, Italy and Federal Germany – economies comparable in size with ours, and not beyond comparison in terms of technical innovation and entrepreneurial drive' (Wallace, 1981, p. 127). The key phrase here is 'comparable in size with ours'; in contrast to the relationship between the UK and many Commonwealth nations, especially those considered to be developing countries, it was expected that academic exchange with developed countries in Europe (EEC) and the USA should be as 'balanced' and reciprocal as possible. In evidence given before the Overseas Development subcommittee on 19 February 1980, Trevor Phillips, the President

TABLE 10. Most popular destinations for UK study abroad students 1955–1978

	1955	1962	1968	1973	1978
Canada	277	650	1403	11,045	2869
Europe*	984	3055	4623	2542	5464
France	664	807	1200	1600	2098
Switzerland	105	171	155	212	263
USA	877	1432	3607	3375	4300

Data from UNESCO *Study Abroad* VII (1955/6); *Statistics of Students Abroad* 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.*The countries placed in UNESCO's 'Europe' category for this data are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK, Yugoslavia.

TABLE 11. Number of UK students studying abroad in other European countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

UK	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Denmark	10	27	66	-	192
France	807	736	-	1705	2098
Germany, Federal Republic of	261	335	444	992	1215
Greece	-	25	58	61	62
Italy	25	65	141	158	201
Netherlands	32	56	77	77	-
USA	1432	3118	3859	2770	4300

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 12. Number of students from France studying abroad in other European countries (with the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

France	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Denmark	7	17	44	-	113
Germany, Federal Republic of	519	705	1339	2244	2371
Greece	6	15	12	13	17
Italy	29	68	205	292	282
Netherlands	16	13	29	44	-
UK	60	84	120	213	384
USA	663	1239	1994	1610	2350

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 13. Number of students from the Federal Republic of Germany studying abroad in other European countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Denmark	65	134	94	-	280
France	1323	1303	-	1770	2493
Greece	3	5	5	6	19
Italy	25	101	155	179	637
Netherlands	120	114	130	164	-
UK	215	324	312	584	826
USA	1003	2194	2521	1610	2980

Data from UNESCO *Statistics of Students Abroad* 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

of the National Union of Students, argued that at a time of economic depression, 'Britain's undergraduates do need, in our view, preparation for a situation where they have to go abroad themselves and with graduate unemployment creeping up towards 20%, that is certainly likely to be the case in a large proportion of people' (Third report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, 1980, p. 73).

Yet it has been argued that what might have made sense from an economic point of view (in terms of relative size of economies, etc.) was difficult to achieve in reality because of other – cultural – imbalances, in particular, the idea that UK students would be much less interested in undertaking a course of higher education in a foreign language than students in other European countries would be in studying in English. As the Overseas Students Trust put it in 1981:

> The issue here for public policy is … how best to promote a balanced and reciprocal flow of students (and others) within an international community which values fluency in the English language, and thus also education in the English language, more highly than English citizens value (for example) fluency or education in Danish, Dutch or Greek (Wallace, 1981, p. 121).

There was also a perception in some circles that places in British universities were 'being taken' by European students and that this was worse than the situation with Commonwealth students because there was not the same sense of obligation or service vis-à-vis the EEC. In particular, there was no perceived imbalance in the level of development. This view comes through clearly in the questioning of senior British Council officials before the parliamentary Estimates Committee on 24 February 1970. Ted Fletcher, Labour MP for Darlington, put the following scenario to the British Council Representative for the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), James McDonaugh:

> Suppose, for example, that a scholarship was given at the Slade for a German student to undertake a course in sculpture. I should imagine that quite a number of English people would like to get into the Slade, so these places are competitive. In those circumstances would the British Council say "Well, in view of the fact that these places are scarce we must make sure that there is an equivalent place in Germany for a British student"? If not, then the British Council is taking a place which would otherwise go to a native British student (First Report from the Expenditure Committee, 1971, p. 133).

When we study the UNESCO data, however, there is no evidence that the lure of an education in English (with its cachet as a global language) was leading to disproportionate numbers of students coming to the UK from France, the FRG, Italy or even Denmark, Greece, and the Netherlands – the countries highlighted by the Overseas Students Trust above – compared with UK students coming the other way. As we can see from Tables 11 and 12, the imbalance was greatest in the case of France. In 1962, France sent just 60 students to the UK while the UK sent 807 to France; this ratio did not change significantly

over the next 16 years. In 1978, while France sent a greater number of students to the UK – 384 in total – the UK sent 2098 to France. In the case of France, for an education in English, the USA proved much more attractive. In 1962, France sent 663 students to study in the USA which by 1978 had risen to 2350. Language aside, the FRG proved equally as popular with French students as a study abroad destination between 1962 and 1978. The story is similar with the FRG (see Table 13). While the FRG sent 215 students to the UK in 1962 and 826 in 1978, the UK sent more to the FRG; less than was the case with France but still more. In 1962, the UK sent 261 students to the FRG and in 1978 1215 students. Language here also does not seem to have played much of a role. Far more West German students (in absolute numbers) studied in the USA (1003 in 1962 compared with 2980 in 1978) than came to the UK. These figures certainly raise questions about long-standing influential narratives about the attractiveness of the UK as a destination for European students (Liu, 2021). Of the three larger European countries highlighted by the Overseas Students Trust, only Italy, on balance, sent slightly more students to the UK than the other way around (see Table 14). In 1962, Italy sent 68 students to the UK compared with 25 UK students who went to Italy. By 1978 this had risen to 293 Italian students in the UK and 201 UK students in Italy.

Turning to look at the smaller countries mentioned – Denmark and the Netherlands, which the Overseas Student Trust assumed would not appeal to UK students because of the language barrier, we once again see either more UK students travelling to these countries for study than the other way around or a relatively balanced flow both ways. As we can see from Table 15, in the case of Denmark, in 1962 things were quite evenly balanced: just 10 UK students went to study in Denmark while 17 Danish students came to the UK; by 1978, the UK was sending substantially more students to Denmark (232) than were coming the other way (104). With the Netherlands likewise, as Table 16 shows, flows were relatively

TABLE 14. Number of students from Italy studying abroad in other European countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

Italy	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Denmark	8	21	18	-	23
France	448	538	-	1208	1389
Germany, Federal Republic of	340	354	432	800	1170
Greece	11	25	21	18	16
Netherlands	19	25	29	22	-
UK	68	86	124	213	293
USA	548	861	1235	720	1140

Data from UNESCO *Statistics of Students Abroad* 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 15. Number of students from Denmark studying abroad in other European countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

Denmark	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
France	79	67	-	145	156
Germany, Federal Republic of	62	68	108	186	198
Greece	-	-	-	1	2
Italy	3	2	15	12	17
Netherlands	3	7	13	17	-
UK	17	35	54	63	104
USA	165	241	289	220	380

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 16. Number of students from the Netherlands studying abroad in other European countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

Netherlands	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Denmark	7	7	24	-	63
France	207	147	-	271	430
Germany, Federal Republic of	370	559	700	1273	1437
Greece	-	5	1	5	4
Italy	11	7	24	21	32
UK	55	98	112	146	246
USA	405	719	894	620	1160

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

TABLE 17. Number of students from Greece studying abroad in other European countries (and in the USA by comparison), 1962–1978

	1962	1966	1970	1974	1978
Denmark	2	7	15	-	21
France	509	553	-	2109	4251
Germany, Federal Republic of	3228	2439	1942	3073	4482
Italy	942	1943	6752	11,963	14,417
Netherlands	9	24	27	36	-
UK	204	344	795	1893	2399
USA	1432	1678	1968	1880	2740

Data from UNESCO Statistics of Students Abroad 1962–8; 1969–73; 1974–8.

balanced to begin with: the Netherlands sending 55 students to the UK in 1962 while the UK sent 32 to the Netherlands. By 1974, this had shifted to a situation where the Netherlands were sending almost twice as many students (146) to the UK as the UK was sending to them (77). Many more students from the Netherlands, however, chose to study in the USA, which is in line with the figures from France and Italy, suggesting studying in English was not a significant draw in terms of

studying in the UK. There were other, more popular options. Only when we turn to look at some of the less-developed smaller countries in Europe, like Greece, does the balance clearly shift back towards the UK as a host country. As we can see from Table 17, in 1966, for example, Greece sent some 344 students to the UK while the UK sent just 25 to Greece. In 1978, this pattern continued with Greece sending 2399 students to the UK and the UK sending just 62 to Greece. The USA was slightly more popular with Greek students in 1978 (2740 students) but non-English-speaking countries accounted for the most popular destinations with Italy attracting some 14,417 students, while France hosted 4251 Greek students and the FRG 4482 respectively. Language clearly was only one of several factors at play when study abroad destinations were chosen. Level of development, as we saw with the Commonwealth countries was also key in determining the balance of flows.

As we saw in the case of France and the FRG, growing ties within the EEC seem to have accounted for more in terms of student exchange than did the economic benefit of studying in English (at least in the UK). As the Overseas Students Trust explained:

> It is impossible to say how much of the close relationship between the French and German Governments which has become the driving force for European cooperation is attributable to the programmes which the two governments have developed for language teaching, student exchange and joint training. But the absence of any comparable educational relationship with Britain, one suspects, is a not unimportant part of the continuing sense - among the British elite as well as among the population at large - of distance from the European continent, and the continuing suspicions and misconceptions on the continent of Britain's intentions and Britain's predicament (Wallace, 1981, pp. 126-127).

However, as we have seen, there were indeed well-developed educational relationships between the UK and France and the FRG, but these were more one-sided with many more students from the UK choosing to study in France and the FRG than the other way around.

Some did recognise this situation at the time. For example, the British Council official questioned before the parliamentary Estimates Committee in February 1970 challenged the claim put to him by Ted Fletcher, namely that West German students were unfairly taking places in UK universities away from British students: 'but the Germans do on their side offer in German universities and institutions all over the country a number of scholarships for British students as well and the balance, if anything, would be on the German side in these particular fields' (First report from the Expenditure Committee, 1971, p. 133). Anthony Kershaw, in his speech from 1976, quoted above, went further, declaring, 'Almost invariably, British students abroad are very largely supported by the country to which they go, so that they have little expenditure in that regard.' 'These expenditures', he suggested, 'must all be calculated and taken into consideration' when calculating the 'burden' of overseas students studying in the UK (Kershaw, 1976, Column 1094).

In their evidence before the Overseas Development sub-committee on the prospect of raising overseas student fees in February 1980, NUS President, Trevor Phillips, declared 'It is worth noting . . . that certainly with the developed world more British students go to those countries than come here, so we are making quite a lot out of it at the moment' (Third report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, 1980, p. 71). This is backed up in the evidence given before the same inquiry by the Controller of the Home Division of the British Council, Jim Ure. He referred to 'very heavy pressure' being placed 'on our representations and missions' by 'certain countries in Western Europe of which the most important is France' over 'the very great imbalance which has now arisen between the arrangements for British students studying in these countries and the conditions and costs and fees and so on for their students wishing to study in Britain' (Third report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, 1980, p. 26).

5. CONCLUSION

In the Introduction we discussed the tendency of the secondary literature to focus on the UK's role as the host of overseas students – and of Commonwealth students, in particular, with little attention paid to its role as a sender nation or to its connections with other parts of the world especially Europe. We noted that this tendency likely reflects a broader trend within British historiography in which Britain is studied *either* in the context of its empire (Commonwealth) *or*, more rarely, in relation to Europe. Only occasionally are both relationships considered together in the same work; as such, the important ways in which they connected, overlapped and influenced each other are easily lost or at least not fully appreciated. Likewise, the extent to which Britain was able to operate and exercise influence across multiple and overlapping geopolitical dimensions is underestimated. In the post-war period, the UK was both a post-imperial power with global connections *and* a European country with developing ties to the EEC. It is within this historiographical context that adopting a transnational history of education approach can be useful; the focus is not on a particular geographical area (and Britain's role within it) but rather upon a particular area of social and cultural life, namely education, and how it operated within and across national and regional borders.

This historiographical bifurcation tends to underestimate (as in other areas) the extent to which government policy towards student exchange with Commonwealth countries and with European countries and the USA was closely linked and intertwined. As we have seen, while there were important differences in the balance of flows between the UK and Commonwealth countries, on the one hand, and European countries, on the other, the ultimate aim of the government, insofar as it developed coherent policy in this area, was, in both cases, to balance the flows and to promote reciprocal, equal exchange. The reasons for this policy aim were, as we have seen, different in the two cases. In the case of the Commonwealth, particularly with

developing Commonwealth countries that sent, on average, considerably more students to the UK than the UK sent in return, there was a hope that a shift away from what was called the 'corrosive' and 'corrupting' donor-recipient relationship towards more of a cooperative and mutual aid approach would improve Britain's international reputation (in an era of decolonization and anti-imperial feeling) and even help preserve its great power status. The motivations in the case of Europe were different although the policy was the same. Here, a desire to benefit economically from exchange with countries of similar size and wealth such as France, the FRG and Italy predominated as did a desire to keep up with and ideally outpace their European and North American rivals.This global perspective, which allows Britain's relationship, not just with the Commonwealth or with Europe, but with all parts of the world to be considered together, has only been possible through the analysis of the rich data collected over the period from 1962 to 1978 by UNESCO which, as a UN agency, naturally adopted a global perspective. This allows us to gain a clearer view of Britain's role as both host and sender of study abroad students in all its complexity; to see how its relations with different parts of the world changed over time and even impacted upon one another.

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